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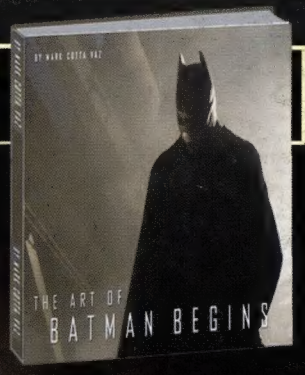

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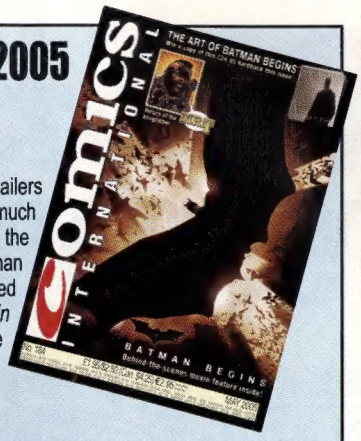

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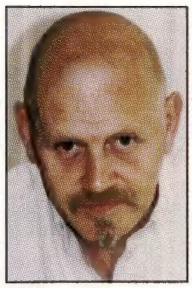
Sez Dez



Editorial
Dez Skinn

IN THE March 1983 issue of **Heavy Metal**, respected comics artist Walter Simonson was quoted as saying "Comics are too cheap".

He continued, "A cheaply made, cheaply sold item is neither respected nor respectable in a modern society such as ours."

The magazine's editor, SF author Ted White, threw in his own opinion with "Today's comics consist of interminable episodes of never ending epics, written by former fans who never learned how to tell concise stories."

He concluded, "And only superhero comics are left, giving the field a single, narrow, self-indulgent focus."

Given that in 1983 **Heavy Metal** was carving out its own more adult, higher cover-priced market – alongside Marvel's then-recently launched rival **Epic Magazine** and our very own Brit upstart **Warrior** – you could argue there was a bias and vested interest in what Messrs Simonson and White had to say. But, with the value of hindsight, it's perhaps worthwhile looking at how things have changed.

Walter's wish has certainly come true. Back then a comicbook was priced around 60c. Today the same title would cost you $2.99. Nobody could call that "too cheap". But, with a 500% price rise, are they more respectable?

While the rank and file writers may still be former fans with little knowledge of short story writing, the "interminable episodes" have been curtailed by the marketing department to suit collected editions, hence four to six-issue story arcs now being the norm.

Superheroes still rule in total, shrinking a medium into a genre. However, diversity of content has bloomed through the growth of the direct market of comic shops and specialist wholesalers, which has led to indie titles with their wide-ranging subject matter thriving despite usually printing less than 5,000

Perhaps the biggest change has been one of style above substance. Irrespective of the now-dominant direct market, it surely hinged on World Color's sale of its Illinois-based Spartan Printing Company to its employees in 1991.

Since 1955, World Color had printed almost all (90-95%) of the US's colour comics, making famous the Benday dot colour tints which put Ray Lichtenstein on the map.

By intent, their letterpress end product was cheap disposable ephemera. They printed over 750 million comics a year, although by the mid-80s it had almost halved.

Then, in 1983, World Color VP Dick Hartman said in the trade mag **Printing Impressions**, "I don't encourage any printer to get into the comic printing business." Why? See next issue. (Wow, the first *Sez Dez* cliffhanger!)

***Comics International** editor Dez Skinn's career in the industry spans 35 years. Titles he has created include **Doctor Who Weekly**, **House of Hammer**, **Hulk Comic**, **Starburst** and **Warrior**. Ex-editorial director of Marvel UK – where his Stan Lee-coined Sez Dez column had a monthly audience of over 500,000 – he has also edited titles including **Buster**, **Conan**, **MAD**, **Star Wars Weekly**, **2000 AD Presents**, **Rogue Trooper** and **Spider-Man** and won over 20 Eagle Awards.*
*Sadly, he's still waiting for any money from his co-created (now in production as a major motion picture) **V for Vendetta**!*

Robert Crumb

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Babylon 5 creator brings his Dream Police to Icon

*'Lost' Straczynski title joins Bendis and Oeming's **Powers** and Mack's **Kabuki** at creator-owned Marvel imprint*

*Above and below: Mike Deodato Jr interior pages from **Dream Police**, a 48-page one-shot written by J Michael Straczynski for Marvel's creator-owned Icon imprint. It ships on June 22, priced $3.99.*

A CONCEPT that got caught up in a long-running dispute between its creator and Marc Silvestri's Image imprint is finally being brought to print by Marvel.

Said in 2000 to be in the pipeline for Top Cow's Joe's Comics label, J Michael Straczynski's **Dream Police** is to become the third title from the Spider-Man publisher's creator-owned Icon imprint. It joins Icon's two inaugural series both of which migrated to the label from Image: **Powers** by Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Avon Oeming and David Mack's **Kabuki**.

Dreamscape cops

Although the *Babylon 5* creator is kicking off **Dream Police** as a 48-pager illustrated by Mike Deodato Jr, his current **Amazing Spider-Man** collaborator, he told **CI** an ongoing series is a possibility. "It was written as a one-shot but, if it does well enough, may become a regular book. I really just wanted to get this one story out there because it's just fun... it's surreal, black, often hysterically funny, and you 'like' these guys. It's just something I really wanted to tell."

The comic is, Straczynski said, "a noir-styled book about plain-clothes detectives and beat cops who patrol the dreamscape we enter every night, protecting us when things go wrong, which they do... and often."

The writer said that he had done his share of police shows, among them *Murder, She Wrote* plus *Walker Texas Ranger* and *Jake and the Fatman* – for which he laughingly apologised. "I've also done my share of fantasy in TV and short stories and the idea of cross-pollinating those two was very attractive to me."

Discussing his approach to storytelling with particular reference to **Dream Police**, the writer said, "To me, what makes for a good story is conflict and contrast. And I liked the idea of something as much a fantasy concept as a dreamscape juxtaposed against a very film noir, hard-boiled narrative structure.

"Further to the point, even though the situations the two leads find themselves in are sometimes funny or surreal," he continued, "they never break character, never break out of that deadpan, staccato, *Dragnet* style of dialogue. Nothing fazes them, and everything is just one more day at the office."

Maltese Falcon

The name of one of the stars of **Dream Police** coupled with Straczynski's mention of *Dragnet* suggested some parallels with the 1950s TV series, which focused on Sgt Joe Friday. "The Joe Thursday name is a nod to that show but the tone of the book overall is emblematic of a wide range of books, movies and series... from the Raymond Chandler/**Maltese Falcon**/*Adam 12/Petrified Forest* school of hardcase detectives."

Straczynski became somewhat enigmatic when asked for story details. "The setting is a city that is in a way all cities rolled into one... the dreamscape is constantly shifting though there are some familiar landmarks here and there.

"Where the dreamscape came from, and the Dream Police, those are mysteries," he added. "I know the answers but sure as heck I ain't giving them away here."

According to Straczynski the comic's mood is definitely noir, "especially given the art that Mike Deodato has done... it looks like something right out of the '40s.

"The stories," he added, "are personal ones told against this fantastic landscape, character stories, rather than a big over-arching plot. This is the kind of book that, if you've never read comics before, you can enjoy. The palette is broad enough and the cultural references general enough that it should attract new readers, because you don't need any advance understanding of the form to follow it."

> ***"... a dreamscape, juxtaposed against a very film noir, hard-boiled narrative structure."***
> *...J Michael Straczynski, writer*

The writer is praising of Mike Deodato's work on the title, saying, "Through it, I've come to appreciate the characters even more. It's one thing to write them sight unseen, when they're kind of ciphers, but once you can see them, they become more real to you, and Mike's really done a great job of bringing them to life."

Straczynski opens Book of Lost Souls

DREAM Police *[see above]* is not the only title J Michael Straczynski is bringing to the creator-owned Icon imprint.

The *Babylon 5* creator and current **Amazing Spider-Man** writer is also developing a new ongoing monthly in collaboration with artist Colleen Doran, whose recent credits include **Reign of the Zodiac**, **Stealth Tribes** and **Orbiter**

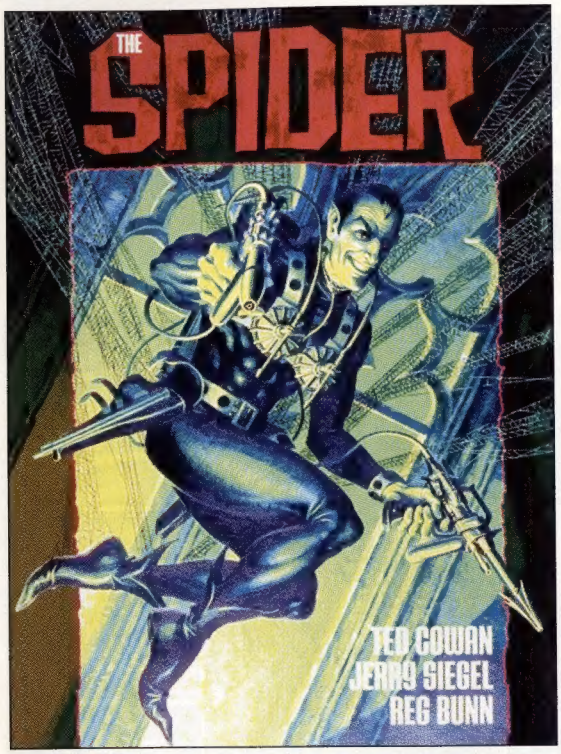
While refusing to be drawn on details of **The Book of Lost Souls**, Straczynski – whose much-delayed 24-issue Image/Top Cow series, **Rising Stars**, finally concluded recently – said, "I'm very much looking forward to what she [Doran] does with the book, which is a somewhat surreal book in some ways and very, very different from anything I've done before in or out of comics."

Mystery, the talking cat

"Dark, moody, romantic, tragic, surreal, metaphysical... it's a book very close to my heart, dealing with the intersection between hope and hopelessness, the nature of love, the threat of greater darkness, madness, destiny, death, genius, magic and best of all it has a talking cat named Mystery," he explained. "What more can you ask for?"

The writer, who said the series is set for a September launch, added, "It follows a fellow named Jonathan, who committed suicide by drowning – or tried to do so – over 100 years ago and resurfaces (literally) in the present, with a big book of names and a mission – to be the force that tilts the balance in people's lives one way or another."

"It's kind of a dark book, but with a certain hopefulness in it," concluded Straczynski, who also hinted that the appropriately named Mystery is perhaps more than he seems.



*COMPLEMENTING the resurrection of IPC's action heroes in WildStorm's Alan Moore-plotted **Albion**, Titan Books is launching a line of 11¾x8¾" hardcovers reprinting their original black and white appearances from such titles as **Lion** and **Valiant**. With a series featuring the Steel Claw in the pipeline, the London-based publisher is launching with the 112-page **The Spider: King of Crooks*** [cover above; art by Gary Leach]. *The £14.99 compilation goes on sale on June 24, five days before the $2.99 **Albion** #1 hits the streets.*

Machine Teen is Marvel Next

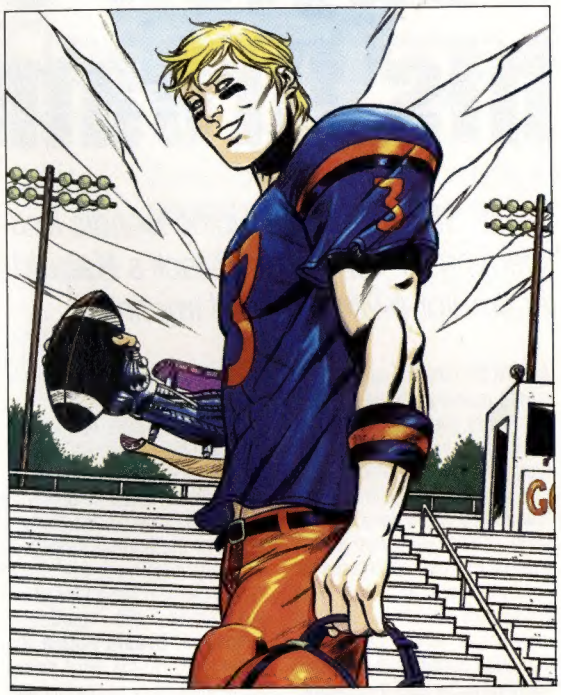
HAVING recently revived **Power Pack**, writer Marc Sumerak is bringing a young hero of his own into the Marvel Universe.

Sumerak is introducing what he describes as a new model of Marvel hero in **Machine Teen**, a *Marvel Next* five-parter drawn by **Queen & Country**'s Mike Hawthorne.

"**Machine Teen** is the story of Adam Aaronson as he discovers that his perfect teenage life is a lot less perfect than he thought – in fact, none of it is even real," the writer told **CI**.

"Adam is actually a high-tech humanoid android built for... well, we don't want to give away all the secrets quite yet," he archly added. "But needless to say, Adam's discovery causes his world to spiral out of control and sends him heading towards a major meltdown.

"Unfortunately, Adam isn't the only one who knows the truth about his origins... and some sinister forces from his secret past are finally about to catch up with him," concluded Sumerak, who insists there is no connection between Aaronson and Aaron Stack aka Machine Man.



*Above: Mike Hawthorne's cover art for the second issue of **Machine Teen**, the series in which, says writer Marc Sumerak, "The perfect teen discovers that he's only perfect because he was built to be." The $2.99* Marvel Next *five-parter premieres on May 25.*

Top Cow scores with City of Heroes

MARK Waid is to write a licensed title that has the potential to be Top Cow's most widely read comic of the past decade.

The former **Fantastic Four** writer – who is also working on **Hunter-Killer** with the Image imprint's head honcho, artist Marc Silvestri – is teaming up with **Proximity Effect** penciller David Nakayama to produce a spin-off from ***City of Heroes***, NCsoft/Cryptic Studios' hugely popular MMORPG [Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game].

*Above: Rodolfo Migliari's cover art for Image/Top Cow's $2.99 **City of Heroes** #2.*

Apart from being offered to the direct market, the comic is also being sent to subscribers to ***City of Heroes***, who have been receiving an edition produced by Blue King Studios for the past year.

"The most exciting part for me," proclaimed Top Cow editor-in-chief, Jim McLauchlin, "is the fact that we'll be sending this out to over 200,000 ***City of Heroes*** players every month. There are a legion of fans out there who love comicbooks as an idea and as a genre but may have forgotten that they love comicbooks in and of themselves. This is our chance to remind them."

Like ***City of Heroes*** itself, the series is set in Paragon City. It is to focus on the game's signature heroes, The Freedom Phalanx, made up of : Statesman, Manticore, Positron, Sister Psyche and Synapse.

● Dark Horse produced a 16-page **City of Heroes** promo one-shot in 2002.

***City of Heroes** #1, priced $2.99, ships in May.*

D&D makes comeback

ALREADY doing well with **G.I. Joe**, its spin-off from Hasbro's action figure line, Devil's Due has acquired the rights to another of the toy and game manufacturer's long-running franchises.

Under the new agreement, the Chicago-based publisher has the comicbook licence to ***Dungeons & Dragons*** as well as the seminal RPG's related universes. These include ***Forgotten Realms***, ***Dragonlance*** and ***Spell Jammers***, all of which had spawned DC titles published alongside an **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** comic between 1988 and '91.

Devil's Due's inaugural title is an adaptation of **Homeland**, the first novel in author R A Salvatore's **Forgotten Realms: The Dark Elf Trilogy**.

The mini, which consists of three 48-page prestige format issues, is by 88MPH Studios' **Ghostbuster** writer Andrew Dabb with art by Tim (**G.I. Joe**) Seeley *[see above]*. The first $4.95 issue ships in June as does the $14.95 **Dragonlance: The Legend of Huma** trade paperback.

An adaptation of Richard Knaak's novel of the same name, this 160-pager includes the previously unpublished concluding chapter of the 2004 mini together with the five issues Devil's Due published before the six-parter was aborted – a consequence of an acrimonious contractual dispute with the then licence holders, Dabel Bros Pro.

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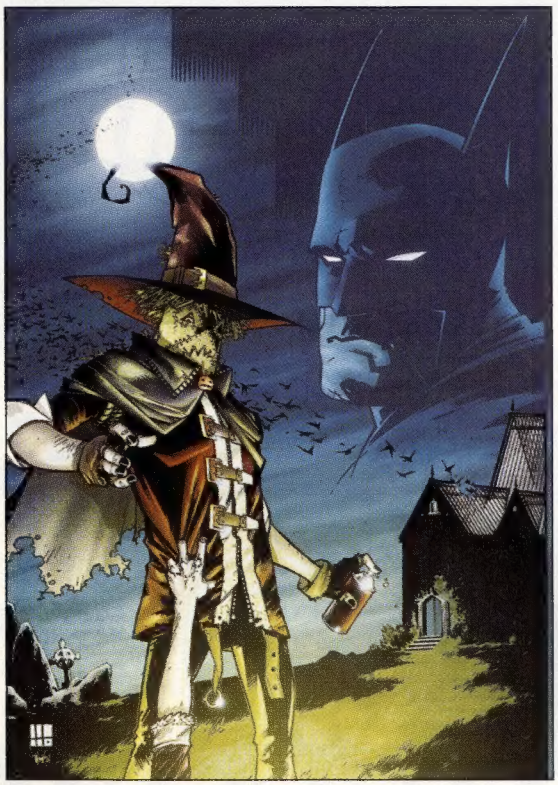
Batman Begins villains spotlighted

IN 1989 Tim Burton re-invented DC's Caped Crusader for cinema audiences as a much darker hero. The director maintained the tone in his aptly-titled 1992 follow up, *Batman Returns*, at which point DC elected to expand its tie-ins beyond the traditional comicbook adaptation by releasing a title spotlighting the film's villain.

It was a strategy that it continued with *Batman Forever* [1995] and 1997's execrable *Batman & Robin* and is reviving for Christopher Nolan's long-awaited *Batman Begins*. The film, which introduces Christian Bale as the Dark Knight, tells how Bruce Wayne came to don the cape and cowl and follows him during his first year fighting crime in Gotham.

Like the previous two *Batman* films, Nolan's movie – which many anticipate will revive the Bat-franchise – features two main villains, each of whom gets his own prestige format mini consisting of two 48-page issues.

Launching closest to the film's premiere is **Year One: Batman/Ra's al Ghul**, which begins on June 15. The mini is drawn by the former **Catwoman** team of Paul Gulacy and Jimmy Palmiotti and written by Devin K Grayson, who told **CI**, "**Year One** – which I need to point out now is not what the script was originally called and is a title that utterly perplexes me since the story occurs over the course of many years, none of which are either Batman nor Ra's first year – takes place predominantly in current-time Gotham City."



Above: Zach Howard's cover art for the concluding episode of DC's $5.99 ***Year One: Batman/Scarecrow*** *two-parter. The prestige format mini launches on May 25.*

Lazarus Pits

"The back-story covers the recent in-continuity events from the main Batbooks, including Ra's death as depicted in **Death and the Maidens**," she continued. "Batman receives a posthumous letter from Ra's warning him of a great calamity that will threaten Gotham and indeed the whole world if, in an effort to keep Ra's from coming back, Batman has destroyed all of the globe's Lazarus Pits."

Summing up, Grayson, who also writes **Nightwing**, said, "At its core, this is ultimately a story about two exceptional men struggling to protect that which they most love – for Ra's, the planet Earth, and for Batman, the human population thereof."

Year One: Batman/Scarecrow debuts on May 25. Unlike Grayson, writer Bruce Jones has no problems with the suffix on the title of the two-parter he has produced in collaboration with Sean Murphy, who drew **Crush** for Dark Horse's *Rocket* imprint. "This is a new, expanded retelling of Batman and Robin's first encounter with Scarecrow Jonathan Crane, as initially published in **World's Finest Comics** #3 back in the day [1941].

Above: Paul Gulacy and Jimmy Palmiotti's cover art for the second 48-page issue of ***Year One: Batman/Ra's al Ghul****. The $5.99 DC two-parter premieres on June 15.*

Jones, who wrote **Incredible Hulk** for Marvel until he recently signed exclusively to DC, acknowledges the marketing opportunity presented by the Scarecrow's appearance in *Batman Begins*, which premieres in the US on June 17 and in the UK five days later. "But DC also felt it was time to put a new spin on an old villain and perhaps delve a bit deeper into his psyche. I did my best to do just that – along with Batman's while I was at it – because my feeling was that the battle between these two was perhaps more psychologically oriented than some of the Dark Knight's other foils. Scarecrow bases so much of his modus operandi on fear rather than overt muscle.

"Anyway," the writer added, "Crane was always interesting to me not just as a DC villain but a character unto himself. Batman's own idea in designing his costume revolved around frightening his combatants, but I think Scarecrow took it several steps further. For me there was always something inherently spooky about scarecrows anyway, standing silently out there in some farmer's field like grim sentinels, tattered clothing flapping in the wind, not moving but always seeming like maybe they did – a fraction – just as you're looking away."

Matador strikes at WildStorm

AS WELL as the *Batman Begins* movie tie-in she is working on with artists Paul Gulacy and Jimmy Palmiotti *[see main story]*, **Nightwing** writer Devin Grayson also has a creator-owned WildStorm six-parter debuting in May.

Urban legend

Illustrated by Brian Stelfreeze – an artist best-known for his cover paintings – the $2.99 **Matador** focuses on a Miami cop. Cuban-born and Florida-bred Detective Isabel Cardona is certain a series of seemingly unrelated murder cases are linked to an urban-legend serial killer but it is not the way her fellow officers see it.

Matador, which was first announced as coming from WildStorm's *Homage* label in 2001, launches on May 4. Discussing the comic with **CI**, Grayson said, "I think the series is actually best summarised by two questions: 'What are the cues we use to judge other people by and how accurate do they prove to be?' And, as Brian puts it, 'What becomes your anchor when your reality collapses?'

"The genesis of the story, and of Isabel, is, in a word, Brian," the writer explained. "The impetus for the whole series was an email I got from Brian asking if I'd be interested in helping him explore and comment on some themes that had apparently been haunting him, including gender issues, reality, and 'those guys' – or, as he put it: 'You know, those guys that are capable of killing 20 men with their bare hands, while sipping champagne and having sex with their enemy's beautiful brunette girlfriend with the funny accent. Yeah, those guys.'

"I was intrigued by every single one of the themes he mentioned and ecstatic to have the opportunity to work with him again," she added, "especially on something that was obviously so close to his heart."

Crime is the Evil

"Crime, in addition to being quite popular a million years ago when we first started discussing the project, is a genre we both feel very connected to and one with which we both feel very able to express ourselves," explained Grayson. "Crime is the Evil of the great big "Battle Between Good and..." on a human scale. Though

I appreciate the allegory of superheroes and greatly enjoy working within that genre, I'm much more comfortable with, and even honestly more interested in, the ways in which that battle plays out beneath the average human's skin."

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Superman gatecrashes Infinite City

*Pictured: Interior pages from DC's **Superman: Infinite City**; art by Carlos Meglia. The 96-page hardcover ships on June 22, priced $24.99.*

DARK Horse's **Star Wars: Underworld** team is reuniting at DC for an original graphic novel that, writer Mike Kennedy told **CI**, follows Superman on a whirlwind adventure through a world of unlimited fantasy.

"It's a fun-filled romp through a dazzling alternate dimension where anything and everything coexists as commonplace, everyday occurrences," he explained. "Magic, monsters, robots, and rayguns are all just part and parcel of what **Infinite City** has to offer."

Discussing the 96-page hardcover, which is painted by Carlos Meglia, Kennedy said, "Infinite City is a nexus of realities in a pocket dimension tucked between all the others. Its origins date back to a certain doomed planet and a certain scientific genius's attempt to save the population.

"I won't spoil too many details revealed in the book but suffice it to say that Clark [Kent] will recognise a lot of familiar elements in Infinite City, buried amidst the flotsam and jetsam of a thousand other bizarre and fantastic cultures. It is truly a cross-dimensional melting pot, where anything Carlos and I could imagine could exist.

"Unfortunately, it exists in a delicate temporal bubble that could implode if any barrier is ruptured, including the various gateways to various other worlds that seem to grow at random. All traffic into and out of Infinite City is strictly controlled, which makes Superman's accidental appearance quite an exciting – and stressful – event," Kennedy concluded.

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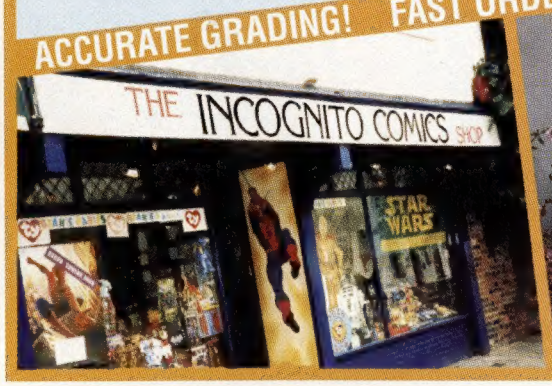

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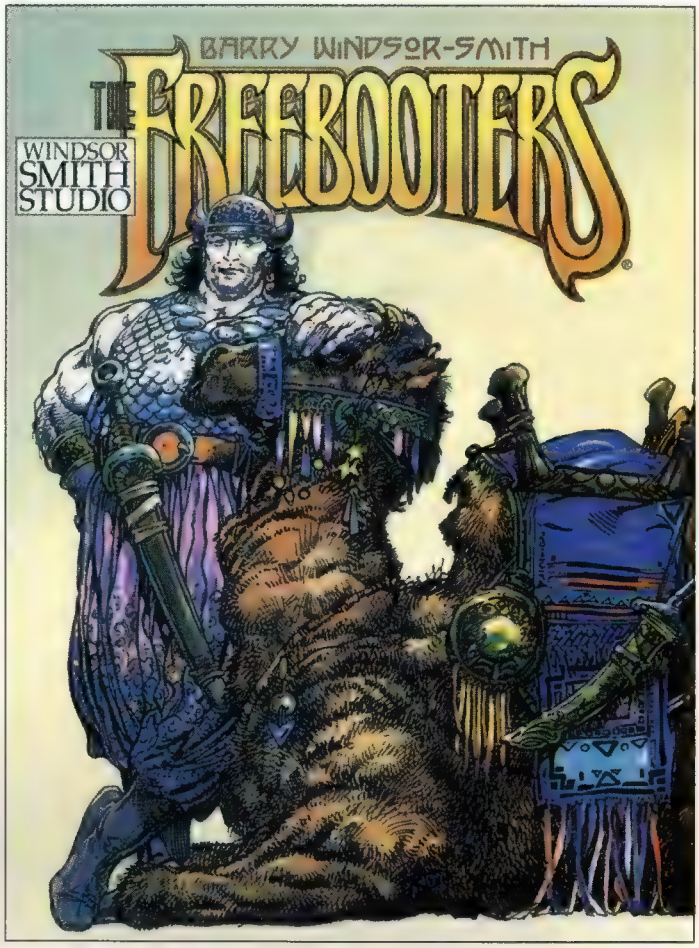

*MARVEL'S original **Conan the Barbarian** artist is wrapping up the sword and sorcery saga he began in his **Storyteller** anthology in 1996. Barry Windsor-Smith's 184-page **The Freebooters** [cover above] includes not only the nine chapters released before Dark Horse aborted his series in 1997 but also the unpublished episode from #10 and more than 50 extra pages of story. Structured like **Young Gods and Friends**, its 9x12" companion title, the $29.95 hardcover ships from Fantagraphics in July. **The Freebooters** is also available with a tipped in plate signed by the writer/artist for a further $20. Turnaround, which also distributes **Young Gods and Friends** and **Ad Astra in Africa** – Windsor-Smith's reworking of an unpublished X-Men story featuring Marvel's Storm – releases **Freebooters** in Britain and Europe on August 4, priced £18.99.*

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Jusko's five years on Tomb Raider

ALMOST five years after Top Cow first solicited a 48-page Joe Jusko-painted **Tomb Raider** one-shot and as many months since it officially cancelled its monthly Image spin-off from Eidos's hugely popular ***Lara Croft*** computer game, the artist has handed in his final pages for **The Greatest Treasure of All** *[cover art right]*.

Top Cow has now scheduled the comic – which is written by original **Tomb Raider** scripter Dan Jurgens – for July, but the delay has pushed the cover price up from $5.95 to $6.99. The additional cost is on top of the $4.95 anxious fans shelled out in 2002 for a 16-page **Tomb Raider: The Greatest Treasure of All Prelude**, which, far from being a prequel to the special, simply featured pages from it.

The 48-pager is set in the Central American jungle, where Croft and Chase Carver – pursued by Central American rebels – attempt to recover the one precious historical artifact that has so far eluded the archeologist-cum-adventurer.

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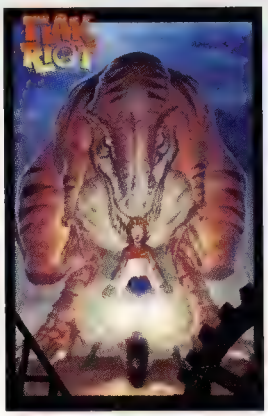
MOONSTONE is expanding its line of Western comics with a series spotlighting one of the Wild West's most notorious women. Joining such titles as ***Cisco Kid***, ***Wyatt Earp*** *and* ***Geronimo: Last Apache Warrior*** *in June is the black and white* ***Belle Starr: Queen of Bandits.*** *Written by Mark (**Iron Man**) Ricketts and illustrated by Steve Buccellato, an artist better known as a colourist, the $2.95 two-parter purports to follow the biographer of the outlaw born Myra Belle Shirley as he investigates the mystery surrounding her 1889 murder.*

Flak Riot starts at Image



HAVING worked on such Marvel titles as **Jubilee**, **Marvel Age: Spider-Man** and **Peter Parker: Spider-Man**, Michael O'Hare has taken himself off to Image, where he is to launch a creator-owned title.

The artist is co-writing **Flak Riot** with Robert Napton, for whom he pencilled Image's recent **Deity: Requiem** one-shot.

Discussing the project with **CI**, O'Hare said, "I guess in Hollywood-speak you'd describe **Flak Riot** as *The Good The Bad and the Ugly* in a car wreck with *Alley McBeal* and *Star Wars*.

O'Hare says the series focuses on Zoe Nixxon, who he describes as a bummed out file clerk who gets fed up with where her life is going so she takes some steps to make a change. "Needless to say," he added with a laugh, "those changes lead her to becoming a bounty hunter in a lawless dimension known as the O.D."

Pictured: An interior page from ***Flak Riot*** *#1 [above] and the cover to the second issue of the Image title [top]; art by Michael O'Hare and Michael Garcia. The $2.99 series launches on June 1.*

Old West

The O.D. or Other Dimension is, as Napton explained to **CI**, "another world right next door [to ours] that is full of different terrains, creatures and spirits. As it turns out holes between Earth and the O.D. have been discovered; the RIOTS are stable holes that serve as doorways between the two realms.

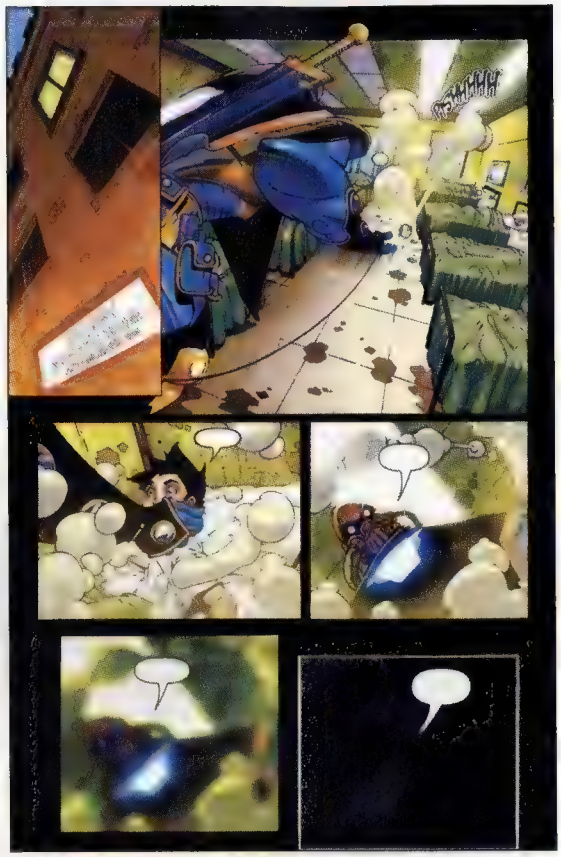
"The O.D. is a new frontier like the Old West and having this new reality to escape to has upped the crime rate. Earth has called upon bounty hunters to balance the scales," added Napton, who is also heading up Bandai's forthcoming manga line.

No Charlton connection for DC's Son of Vulcan

WRITER Scott Beatty is about to erase one of Charlton's more obscure action heroes from existence while looking to answer the question of what Robin is without Batman or what happens when the junior partner loses his mentor before he learns the ropes of being a costumed superhero.

Although DC acquired the Son of Vulcan in 1983 along with such other Charlton Heroes as Blue Beetle, Captain Atom and the Question, the only DC Universe appearance of the character whose short-lived career began in 1965's **Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds** #46 [1965] looks like being his brief cameo in **Crisis on Infinite Earths** [1985].

Son of Vulcan may be the name of Beatty's new six-parter but, as the writer stressed to **CI**, the series has nothing to do with the Charlton hero. He says DC vice president – executive editor Dan Didio suggested he use the name as it had been lying fallow for some time. "Given the focus of the series, the title couldn't have been more perfect."



Junior partner

Asked what inspired the project, the writer said, "I've always been drawn to sidekicks, as evidenced by a few of my more high-profile works – **Robin Year One**, **Batgirl Year One**, **Nightwing Year One**. For a young reader, the junior partner is a window into the material... the kid you could be or the kid you most want to be. It's that envy that Robin's 'playground' is the Batcave... or that Batman trusts the Boy Wonder enough to give him his own Batcycle or mini-helicopter."

Beatty said the mini, which is drawn by Keron (**New Mutants**) Grant, is set in the mainstream DCU. "Vulcan's history will be revealed in part as the miniseries progresses. There's a reason why Vulcan is mostly 'unknown' to the DCU but an important player nonetheless and it's all tied to his raison d'etre."

With great power

Asked about the main theme of the series, which focuses on Vulcan's new kid sidekick Mikey Devante, Beatty responded, "It's not just the responsibility that comes with great power but the sheer burden of it. Becoming a kid sidekick isn't all punning punchouts and victory laps around the subterranean secret head-quarters. You also inherit your mentor's foes, who hate you by association. When you swear the oath of fealty, you also sign your own death warrant.

"From Mikey's perspective – and the situation he's thrust into – being a superhero is probably the worst possible choice he could have made. But he really doesn't have the luxury of weighing his options," the writer concluded.

***Son of Vulcan** #1, priced $2.99, ships on June 1.*

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Gotham Guidelines

"Jesus was a black man. No, Jesus was Batman. No no no, that was Bruce Wayne." This time, it's Christian Bale who lives up to Black Grape's timeless lyrics.

Sir Michael Caine as Alfred Pennyworth, Wayne's loyal butler. This has got to be the beefiest ever portrayal of the unusually emaciated manservant.

Deja vu time – haven't we seen that 'tache before? It seems that Gary Oldman as Lt Jim Gordon has been given Ian Beale's old moustache from Oldman's real-life sister in *Eastenders*, big Mo.

Liam Neeson plays Henri Ducard, who is the mentor to a fledgling hero, teaching him fighting skills and the way of the world. Hang on a minute, hasn't he already done this a long, long time ago, i n a galaxy far, far away? Yeah, that's right, I think it was in *Krull*.

You don't get any for ages, then all of a sudden, two turn up at once. Ken Watanabe is Ra's Al Ghul, one of two main villains in the movie. A master at martial arts, he can also make farty sounds in his hands without having to put them between his knees.

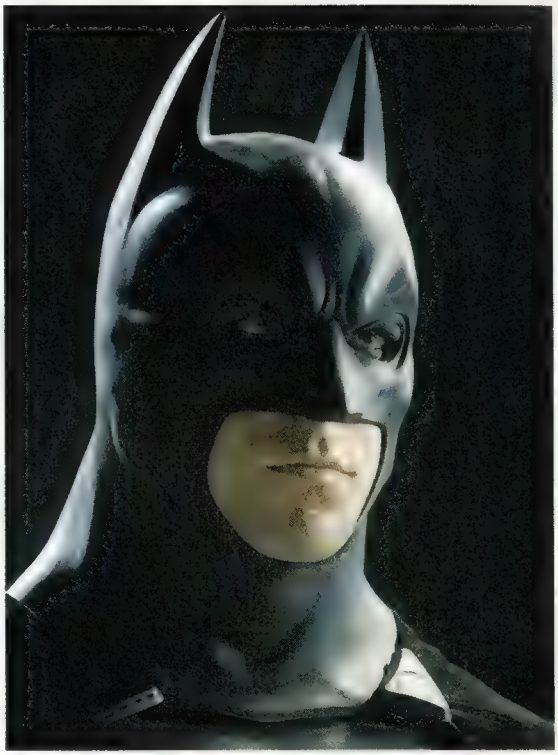
Once again... Batman Begins

*The Dark Knight goes through his umpteenth screen incarnation this summer. **CI** provides an overview, but has to ask, "like a repeat burglar, is it possible for Batman to be released without Rob(b)in(g)?".*

Batman Begins feature by **Gary Eliot**

AS THE general public will shortly view *Batman Begins*, comic readers have a really good opportunity to rub their hands with glee when punters leave a cinema pleasantly surprised by a comic-based movie. Like finding a superb unknown album that you know will be the theme tune for summer in every shop and passing car, it can be really good to have a certain feeling that you are ahead of the game in the "cool stakes".

If you are into the Caped Crusader, be prepared for this feeling again on July 17th in the US, and the 24th in the UK.



Nothing to lose

The latest outing overhauls Batman's origin, thus acting as a prequel to the 1989 movie. An issue #0, if you will. This audacious project is directed and co-written by Christopher Nolan, an English director who scored a self-penned hit with *Memento* and then *Insomnia*. In movie terms, this is a mammoth gamble by movie execs to kick-start a dead franchise akin to giving Grant Morrison carte blanche over the Doom Patrol in the early '90s.

Nolan has viewed the previous movies and found their faults. They may have become camper than a row of tents, but Joel Schumaker's final two Bat-movies made shedloads of cash – even though they sucked big time.

Equally, Tim Burton's original vision of Batman wasn't perceived as forceful enough, surrounded by an overpowering supporting cast.

An early sign of this one creating its own path is that the age of the viewer has been raised to PG-13 in the States; this is because of its "intense action violence, disturbing images and some thematic elements" as US censors rate it.

The McDonald's Happy Meal generation has been dropped (meaning a loss of lucrative licencing deals) so the emphasis will be placed solidly on its storyline and production. This also allows for a backdrop of a violent and bleak Gotham with characters that are real killers, mirroring the 21st century American way of life.

Updated familiarity

This seems to tie in with the themes found in the seminal Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli **Batman: Year One**, with a Denny O'Neil/ Neal Adams overlay.

The person behind the strong comics connection is the co-writer, David S Goyer. His screenplay with Nolan includes not one, but two villains: Ra's Al Ghul and the

Top: The new-look Batman, who isn't all that different from the older movie versions except for the steely gaze which Bale has imbued the character with. Above: The new compact Batmobile. There are two versions in reality,the noisy for close-ups and the speedy model that does 0-60mph in six seconds.

Above: Batman gets slightly peeved when he realises that Jim Gordon has not been taking notice of the energy saving campaign about turning lights out.

Scarecrow. Goyer's cut his teeth screenwriting *Blade, Crow II*, the in-production *Ghost Rider* movie, the *Nick Fury* TV series and the pre-production *Flash* movie, so he knows his stuff. Moreover, the film's working title was *Batman: Intimidation* to get the feel for the more down to earth subject matter. Are you getting that warm glow yet?

Big Bat-budget and big Bat-cast

The cast list is impressive, *very* impressive. Christian Bale, a ubiquitous Welsh actor, is taking the lead Batman/Bruce Wayne role.

In his last movie, *The Machinist*, Bale shed over four stone to give the look of his tortured character. Now he's put on seven stone to beef up his six foot two frame as Gotham City's protector.

If that wasn't enough, he's already portrayed a truly menacing figure in his role as the selfish '80s yuppie Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*, the film that made his name. That menacing demeanour fits the Batman part perfectly.

This intimidating performance has been deliberately honed, as his take on Batman is that Wayne is really Batman, with playboy Brucie (alright my loves? No, not that one) as his alter ego.

The film takes the mid-ground between the comics and the Burton era in that his revenge is not sated by killing, but by vengeance.

Michael Caine is Alfred Pennyworth, the loyal butler. Inspired casting, but makes you feel old when you've grown up with an actor and now he's playing someone his own age, a pensioner! (Caine is 72 this year – not a lot of people know that.)

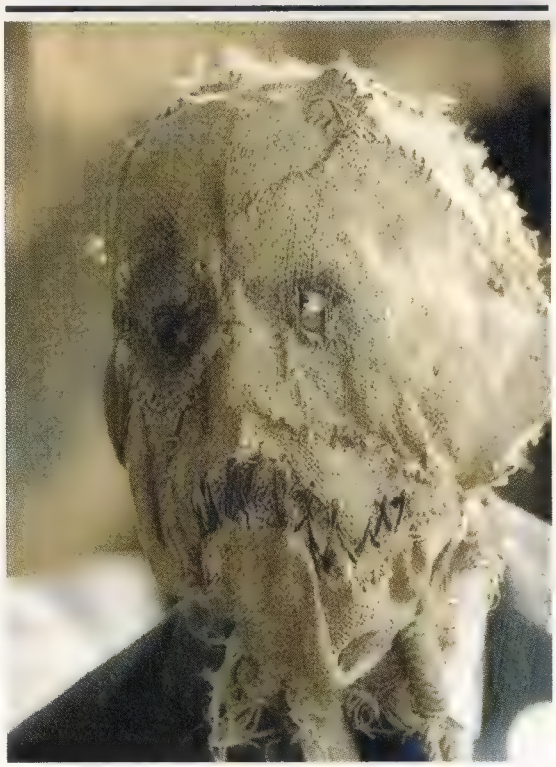
Helping to hone the skills of the embryonic Batman is Henri Ducard (Liam Neeson), who trains Wayne in the use of martial arts that Ducard has learnt from being a senior dude in Ra's Al Ghul's League of Shadows.

Henri Ducard originally appeared in the Sam Hamm penned trilogy *Blind Justice*, [**Detective Comics** #598-600]. Hamm was also screenwriter of the 1989 movie, so there's another tip of the hat from co-writer Goyer.

Gary Oldman plays Lieutenant James Gordon, a good cop in a corrupt police department, a faithful leap from **Year One**. Oldman's previous link to the film franchise was that he was married to *Batman and Robin*'s Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman) for two years.

Batman Begins forges a closer working partnership between Gordon and Batman, which has never really been worked upon before in other films. Let's hope they give Bats a red phone again, eh?

> "I was concerned that, in previous films in the Warner franchise, the villains were always more interesting than *Batman*, whereas it should have been the other way round."
>
> *...Christian Bale, Bruce/Batman*



Above: Cillian Murphy as Jonathan Crane, aka the Scarecrow. Well, this could be how the rumour started that Murphy is good in the sack.

A pain in the Flass

With Gordon's nemesis being mob boss Carmine Falcone (Tom Wilkinson) who has ties to cops on the take (like Detective Flass, played by Barry Dowden), the odds are stacked against the recently-transferred flatfoot. The top Gotham cop is Commissioner

Gotham Guidelines

Uberbabe Katie Holmes plays Rachel Dawes, a childhood pal of Wayne's, who now happens to be Gotham's assistant D.A.

Jonathon Crane (Cillian Murphy) is the director in charge of the lunatics of Arkham Asylum. Although it has not been proven that this aspect of the film is based on a certain Fun Boy Three hit song, I have my suspicions.

This is the city's top crime boss, Carmine Falcone. He has the GCPD on his payroll, and has many secrets in Gotham. The biggest one of them being he is really Yorkshireman Tom Wilkinson playing an Italian mobster. Far out!

Whenever Wayne needs it, Morgan Freeman lends him a shoulder as Lucius Fox at Wayne Industries. Look at his chops – not even he can believe how many stars are in this film already, let alone the rest of us.

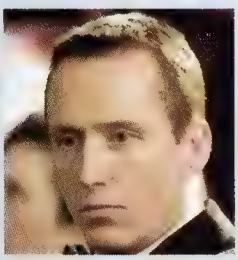
Rutger Hauer plays Jerry Springer halfway through the movie. Well actually, that's all lies. He's Richard Earle, a major shareholder of Wayne Industries. But can Bruce trust him?

C'mon, you don't have to be a pure genius to work that one out.

Gotham Guidelines

Hey diddley dee, a copper's life for me. Colin McFarlane performs his duty as Commissoner Gillian Loeb, Gotham City's top cop. He is also as bent as the $15 dollar notes he pays his officers.

Barry Dowden (left) is Loebs' right-hand man, Detective Flass. I don't know what links he's got with Kevin the silent assassin from *Sin City*, but he'd better not accept that invite for dinner.



"Somebody call a doctor, I've got shooting pains in my stomach. Wait a minute, I am one. A Doctor, that is – not a stomach." Linus Roache plays doomed dad Dr Thomas Wayne.

This is Sara Stewart, who has the painful role of Martha (Mum) Wayne. If they use the imagery from Frank Miller's Batman, she's going to regret being given that pearl necklace.

Brighton's Tim Booth gets a decent cameo as pyschopathic killer Victor Zsasz. Personally, I don't think that he has the qualities to pull it off. Maybe he should have waited for the role of Robin.

Above: "Come on, don't be shy. Just pucker up and then I'll go away." Batman gets all "Big Shirley On E-Wing" with Jonathan Crane, aka Scarecrow.

Gillian Loeb, played by Colin *(The Fast Show)* McFarlane. Despite playing generally faithful to the comics lore, yet again this is another one of these Hollywood token gestures, changing a character's race. Here from cuasasian to black.

Let's hope Loebs doesn't emulate Harvey Dent (Two-Face) when the movie version went all Michael Jackson by turning Billy Dee Williams into Tommy Lee Jones.

Cillian (*28 Days Later*) Murphy plays Dr Jonathan Crane, aka The Scarecrow, a giver of toxins that produce your worst nightmare. (Mine is Michael Howard being Prime Minister.)

Crane starts out as the head honcho at Arkham Asylum (home to the lunatic fringe of the Batman universe), but soon abuses his position. This early inclusion of Arkham with existing inmates instantly opens up endless plotlines.

Unpredictably, Alan Grant's creation the vile serial killer Victor Zsasz (Tim Booth, the ex-lead singer from the indie group James) is the first to be seen.

You can't fool Ghul

During flashback sequences, Linus Roache (*Ridicules of Chronic*. Sorry, *Chronicles of Riddick*) and Sara Stewart (*Monarch of the Glen*) keep appearing as the unfortunate Wayne parents before "dey is iced" by smalltime crook Joe Chill (Richard Brake).

One fascinating fact so far is that all actors here listed are from Great Britain: the same hallmarks of the '80s comics creator invasion. As for the overseas cast, let's kick off with the extremely cute Katie (*Phone Booth*) Holmes as assistant DA, her boss being Carlton Finch (Irishman Larry Holden).

A friend of Bruce Wayne since childhood, she acts as a voice of reason to the angry adult playboy. This role replaces Dr Leslie Thompkins from the comics, but for mass appeal knocks 30 years off her age.

But the most dramatic change of all has got to be Ra's Al Ghul (Ken Watanabe). Let's face it, he's not always been the best Batman villian – I've seen a Turkish Delight have more eastern promise, and his name's a pain in the arse to type. Is it me, or has the man always seemed dated, a throwback idea from some hippie on the West Coast?

Above: This is the result if you taunt a leather-clad defender of justice by calling him a "poofhouse".

The spin in the movie is that Ra's plays an intrinsic part in the formation of Bruce Wayne's path to becoming Batman, via his League Of Shadows and his right-hand man Henri Ducard.

The Himalayan scenes have the whiff of a *Matrix* zen-fighting technique. Ra's comes across as a ninja-style Keyser Soze, which ain't a bad rep to have.

To bring us back to Gotham, the Wayne Industries set-up has us watching Richard Earle (Rutger Hauer) the director of the military section, vie for power over Lucius Fox (Morgan Freeman). With Fox at Wayne's side, we see the explanation of how all "those wonderful toys" make their way to the Batcave.

This film falls squarely between the weirdness of Tim Burton and the unashamed sell-out of the Schumaker era. This is a sturdy opener for a DC franchise, which desperately needs to keep up with Marvel.

With *Superman Returns* due next summer, the World's Finest pair has finally caught up with each other in the number of films released.

Surely with a mean Christian Bale Batman, and all-American Brandon Routh as Superman, we can now see the Frank Miller style relationship we long for; somebody pass Bats the boxing gloves, please.

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Sin City (C)2005 Dark Horse Comics

DC Universe in state of flux

2005 is turning out to be a year of upheaval for the DC Universe.

The revelations of the covert activities of some of the major heroes in **Identity Crisis** have been followed by the death of a former Justice League member in **Countdown to Infinite Crisis** and there is more to come.

In **Villains United**, the questionable actions of some heroes – as revealed in **Identity Crisis** – come back to haunt the superhero community as the DCU bad guys band together for protection while events presaged in the recent **Adam Strange** mini are about to come to a head in **The Rann/Thanagar War**.

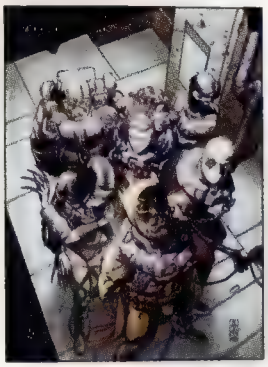
Illustrated by the **H-E-R-O** art team of Dale Eaglesham and Wade von Grawbadger, **Villains United** is a $2.50 six-parter written by **Birds of Prey**'s Gail Simone, who told **CI** that the series is "about seeing the DC Universe's very worst elements, everything from petty costumed riffraff to mass murdering super-powered despots, forming an uneasy alliance, ostensibly to protect themselves against superheroes who are going well beyond what the law allows as punishment."

One sick mind

"But these people being who they are, betrayal's hardwired into their make-up. Additionally, there are a small handful of six relatively minor supervillains who refuse to play along and find themselves hunted by their own community," she added. "It's just the most fun parts of your favourite comics, without any messy superheroics to get in the way."

Asked what had attracted her to the project, Simone responded, "Well, I love heroic characters, I do. But it's nice to turn off that part of my brain and think like one sick mind after another.

"In general," continued the writer, "these villains have understandable motives. They want love, they want power, they want money, whatever... it's their methods that make them the bad guys, in many cases. So we do examine their values. Is loyalty still an honourable trait, when put into dishonourable service?"



*Above: J G Jones' cover art for the third of the six $2.50 issues of DC's **Villains United**.*

*Above: Ivan Reis and Marc Campos' cover art for the penultimate chapter in DC's **Rann/Thanagar War** four-parter.*

War declared

Villains United premieres on May 4 with the first issue of **The Rann/Thanagar War** following a week later.

Another $2.50 six-parter, it is drawn by Ivan Reis and Marc Campos – who worked together on **Action Comics** and CrossGen's **Lady Death**– and written by **The Originals**' Dave Gibbons, who told **CI** it also forms part of larger plans for the DCU.

"What we're doing is polarising the outer space science fiction section of the DC Universe," explained Gibbons, who co-created **Watchmen**. "Out of all the characters and concepts you've seen so far, there are those who side with Rann – which is basically science, rationality, the brain – and those who side with Thanagar, which is basically the heart, war, warriors.

"What we wanted to do was introduce an element of coherent conflict into the DC science fiction universe so that from the day the Rann/Thanagar War is declared every outer space character is in one camp or the other," added the writer, who says the mini heavily features not only Adam Strange, Hawkman and Hawkwoman but also Hawkgirl, Kyle Rayner, Captain Comet, Blackfire, Tigorr and Prince Gavyn aka Starman. "I don't resolve the war but it does reach a resolution because there are more forces at play than merely Rann and Thanagar

"The state of war in the galaxy will persist," Gibbons concluded.

New life for MC2 line?

***Spider-Girl**'s continued survival offers writer Tom DeFalco opportunity to resuscitate rest of Marvel's possible future heroes in five-issue mini*

WITH collections of the last of its *MC2* titles doing exceptionally well as manga-sized trade paperbacks, Marvel is intending to offer reprints of the short-lived line's other comics in the same format.

The plan is to capitalise on **Spider-Girl**'s continued success by releasing **A-Next**, **Wild Thing** and other such *MC2* compilations under a **Spider-Girl Presents...** umbrella.

Marvel's first step is to revive interest in **Fantastic Five**, **J2** and the other futuristic titles that featured this possible next generation of Marvel heroes. This it is hoping to achieve via a five-parter that is to reintroduce the MC2 Universe and its full cast.

Last Hero Standing is written by Tom DeFalco, who created the line in 1998 after introducing Spider-Girl – and the possible future in which this daughter of Spider-Man exists – in **What If...?** vol 2 #105 earlier that year.

"With **Last Hero Standing** we assume the reader has never read an *MC2* book. I'm just taking that for granted," the writer stated. "We use the Watcher to introduce our universe and our world to the readers and hope we do it in such a way that, if you have read an *MC2* comic, it won't bore you."

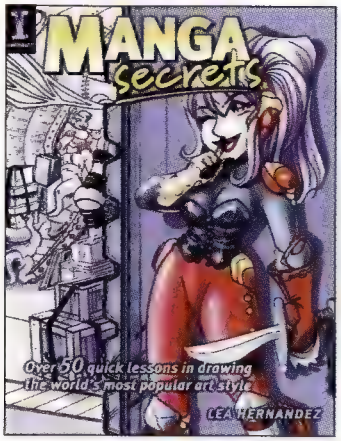
Asked by **CI** to explain the title, DeFalco said, "Many creators and readers have told me that they don't believe in heroes any more. They don't think the modern comicbook industry can really support the old-fashioned idea of a hero. They believe the cynical route is the only way to go.

> ***"Many creators and readers don't think the modern comicbook industry can really support the old-fashioned idea of a hero.***
> *...Tom DeFalco, writer*

"In many regards **Last Hero Standing**, while a 'hoo-haa' adventure story with many twists turns and a lot of visual action because – hey – it's fun and that's kinda what I do, is basically my discussion on the Stan Lee-style hero versus the modern, more cynical approach to a hero," said DeFalco, who, as creator/writer of **Spider-Girl**, is responsible for one of Marvel's most successful launches of recent years. "What we show is the difference between the two."

The $2.99 five-parter is pencilled by Pat (**Spider-Girl**) Olliffe and features cover art by Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna *[art for #1 shown above]*. Shipping weekly from June 1, it tells how the younger MC2 heroes band together to discover how and why Spider-Man, Captain America, the Thing, Hawkeye, the Scarlet Witch and the rest of the first generation of Marvel heroes are vanishing without trace and where they have disappeared to.

CBG parent launches Impact



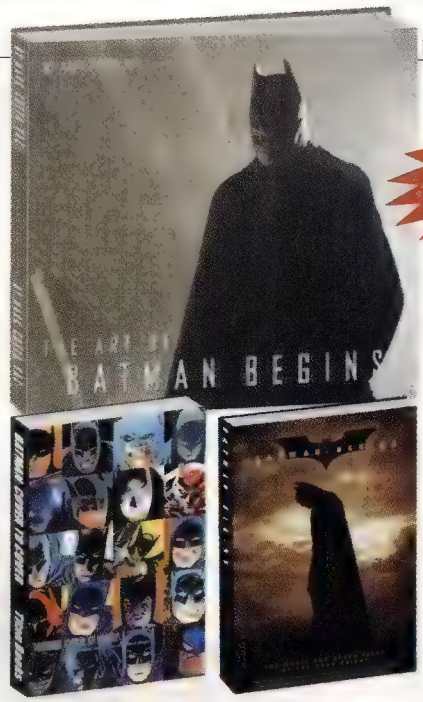
DICK Giordano and Peter David are only two of the comics creators producing comics tutorials for Impact Books.

A new imprint from F+W Publications, the Cincinatti-based owner of Krause – publisher of **Comic Buyer's Guide** – Impact launched with a raft of titles that included new editions of Will Eisner's **Comics & Sequential Art** and **Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative**. Also included were **Manga Secrets** by Lea Hernandez *[cover above]*, Vince Giarrano's **Comics Crash Course** and **Superhero Madness** by David Okum.

The 128-page **Draw Comics with Dick Giordano** *[cover above]* ships in June. An 8x11½" softcover it is priced $19.99 as are a new edition of **How to Draw and Sell Comics** by UK's Alan McKenzie and **Dragon Art** by J 'Neon Dragon' Peffer, which follow in September.

Lined up for November is **Superhero Explosion** by Neil Yamamoto while next February brings **Extreme Action** by Billy Dallas Patton with **Drawing Comics with Peter David** set for June.

*SHOWN above is Sean Phillips art for the cover to the Dark Horse trade paperback that is to collect the **Serenity** mini co-written by* Buffy the Vampire Slayer *creator Joss Whedon. The $2.99 three-parter, which launches on July 6, bridges the gap between the writer/director's cancelled SF TV series,* Firefly *and its feature film spin-off,* Serenity, *which premieres in the US on September 30. Whedon's co-writer on the project is* Firefly *scripter Brett Matthews, whose comics credits include **Spider-Man/Wolverine** and – with Whedon – 2002's **Angel**, the four-issue Dark Horse tie-in with the* Buffy *spin-off. Every issue of the **Serenity** mini – which is drawn by Will (**Witches**) Conrad – is to ship with three different covers, each depicting one of the movie's nine main characters.*



£290 worth of prizes!

Titan Books, the leading UK publisher of graphic novels, has a plethora of Batman titles lined up to accompany the highly-anticipated theatrical release of *Batman Begins*.

The Art of Batman Begins (ISBN 1-84576-094-8; £24.95) is written by New York Times best-selling author Mark Cotta Vaz.

This 144 page full colour hardback features a wealth of exclusive interviews and visuals surely one of the most in-depth *Art of* books ever published!

...And we've got FIVE copies to give away to **CI** readers!

Winners will also receive a copy of Titan's new **Batman: Cover to Cover** (ISBN 1-84576-100-6) an oversized £24.95 slipcase edition showcasing 250 all-time great covers plus commentary by Neil Gaiman, Adam West, Alex Ross, director Christopher Nolan and more.

...Plus a copy of the new **Batman Begins: The Movie and Other Tales** (ISBN: 1-84576-067-0). This £7.99 160 page trade paperback not only adapts the movie, it also includes four pivotal Dark Knight adventures!

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To enter,simply choose the correct answer to the following question:

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The winners will be selected and announced in Comics International #186

Please also complete the following:

My five favourite features this issue (please mark in order of preference, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th; no ticks) were:

___ NEWS INTERNATIONAL
___ NEWS ROUNDUP
___ SEZ DEZ
___ BATMAN FEATURE
___ TALKING SHOP
___ NOVEL GRAPHICS
___ FRAME TO FRAME
___ PREVIEW (MR. T)
___ REVIEWS
___ BIFF'S ILLUMINATIONS
___ ADVANCE LISTINGS
___ IN THE GUTTER
___ NETWORKS
___ Q&A
___ COMMENT
___ PANEL BEATERS
___ COMICS ECONOMICS
___ LETTERS/COMIC CUTS
___ EVENTS GUIDE
___ ADVERTISEMENTS
___ COMPETITION
___ DIRECTORY

PLUS... which of the above is your LEAST favourite, the one you skipped reading, the one you wish we'd replace with a new contender for the top spot:

_____

Send this form (sorry, no faxes, copies or e-mails) to:

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COMICS INTERNATIONAL,
345 DITCHLING ROAD, BRIGHTON BN1 6JJ

All entries must be postmarked before May 31st, 2005

*ALTHOUGH based on the life of Temujin, the son of a minor Mongol chief who rose to become Genghis Khan, the warlord who led his people to rule two thirds of the known world, Moonstone's **Khan** is more of a sword and sorcery saga than it is a biography. The $2.95 black and white series launches in June. It is drawn by Don Hudson – who created Image's 1999 four-parter **Forever Amber** – and written by former Marvel editor-in-chief Tom (**Spider-Girl**) DeFalco. "While there are certain biographical elements, this is a heroic fantasy version of the life of Genghis Khan," the writer told **CI**.*

US Rebellion ends

IN WHAT must be a big disappointment to Rebellion, **2000 AD**'s Oxford-based publisher, DC has decided to discontinue its line of titles reprinting strips from the long-running SF weekly.

The move comes just a year after the joint venture was first announced and less than nine months after the line launched last September with the 208-page **Batman/Judge Dredd Files**.

It is not the first time the New York-based publisher has been forced to admit to defeat in regards to a **2000 AD** project.

In 1994, in anticipation of the Sylvester Stallone-starring *Judge Dredd* movie due for release the following year, it originated material for two comics featuring the Mega-City lawmaker. Neither **Judge Dredd** nor **Judge Dredd: Legends of the Law** lasted longer than 18 months.

While DC had no comment on the rationale for its current decision, it is unlikely that it is for any reason other than poor performance. With sales of 2,151 copies, the **Batman/Dredd** title made #39 in Diamond's Top 100 Graphic Novels but the other title released at the same time, **Sinister Dexter: Gunshark Vacation**, failed to chart. The 100 bottoms out with two perennials sellers: a Dark Horse **Hellboy** trade [second printing] and DC's **Kingdom Come** collection, both of which moved 1,183 copies in September alone.

However, these numbers relate only to the direct market. The main aim of the current joint venture was to cater to the burgeoning bookstore demand for graphic novels. With no figures available for that market, it must be assumed they reflect the lack of success the **2000 AD** titles met in comic shops.

This is highly likely given the material selected, which has been eclectic, at best. Although it did include titles by such bankable writers as Garth Ennis, Mark Millar and Alan Moore, it chose, for example, to lead with the latter's **Skizz** rather than his more popular **Ballad of Halo Jones**. Ironically that title is to be one of the last published by the line, which folds in June.

DC and Rebellion should be praised for attempting to expand the market but such quirky choices as **Devlin Waugh** and **Nikolai Dante** must be questioned in the light of the failure.

A Lifetime in Comics

*Veteran Marvel artist best-remembered for **Ghost Rider**, **Rawhide Kid** and **Sgt Fury** goes autobiographical in Mecca graphic novel trilogy*

DICK Ayers is planning to tell of his life in the comics industry in a series of three 120-page graphic novels.

Taking a more traditional approach than the intense and personal technique popularised by such comics creators as Harvey Pekar and Chester Brown, Mecca Comics' black and white **Dick Ayers Story: An Illustrated Autobiography** begins with a volume covering the veteran artists early years. The $17.95 softcover spans the period from his early childhood through his time in the Army and up to 1951.

Ghost Rider

Born in 1924, the artist best-known for his western and war work on such titles as **Sgt Fury** and **Jonah Hex** admits the idea of writing and drawing a comic-book version of his life was not his. "About four years ago, I was frustrated typing an article about my career for a magazine when my wife Lindy suggested doing an autobiographical graphic novel. I gave it a shot and I really enjoyed doing it."

The 80-year-old Ayers completed the first 120-pager last October. "Volumes two and three will cover the remainder of my career from my Marvel days through 2004. I'm hard at work on volume two right now."

Commenting on the changes he has seen during the course of his career, which began in 1947, the artist said, "The big change in comics currently is that the stories aren't illustrated in panel sequence any more; my observation is that one needs a road map to read the captioning and ballooning sequence."

Chips Wilde

Westerns are Ayers' preferred genre. While closely associated with DC's **Jonah Hex**, he also worked on the adventures of such other cowboy heroes as Wyatt Earp, Rawhide Kid, Two-Gun Kid, Kid Colt and Outlaw Kid as well as on a miscellany of short backup strips. He also co-created the wild west hero, Ghost Rider for Magazine Enterprises in 1949. "I did 14 issues of **Ghost Rider**. He also was a feature in **Tim Holt**, **Red Mask**, **Bobby Benson** and **Best of the West** and is now being reprinted as the lead strip in AC Comics' **Best of the West**. I did over 160 *Ghost Rider* stories for Magazine Enterprises."

Complementing its release of the first volume of the artist's autobiography, Mecca has just launched Ayers' own western creation into his own black and white series. The $2.95 **Chips Wilde** stars a character the artist conceived in 1947 as a class assignment for Burn Hogarth's School of Visual Arts class in comic strip writing.

Forced to do good

THE ENIGMATICALLY named Eric J is working on his first project since leaving **Rex Mundi**, the Image series he launched with writer Arvid Nelson in 2002.

The artist is teaming up with **Gotham Girls** writer Paul D Storrie for the black and white **Revisionary**. The two-issue Moonstone series is, he said, "basically about this really, like, unscrupulous cat that's a TV psychic who gets 'gifted' with real precognitive visions from a mysterious old man that's pissed at him for carrying off the fraud that is his life, much less his career.

"The twist," J added, "is that once he gets a vision about someone else he has to help that person avoid their fate or he's cursed to relive their torment in the form of nightmares and such.

"So here's a guy who really only cares about himself and very few other people basically being forced by his 'gift' to do good. It derails his career and essentially screws up the life he's put together for himself," continued the artist, who is to begin working with an inker as of issue #2 in an effort to increase his output.

He said, about this common artist's dilemma, "I prefer doing my own inks because I like having control of the final product. It's nerve racking to say the least handing my pencils off to someone else and not knowing how they'll come back to me. Different inkers have very distinct styles and can drastically alter the final look of the page."

***Revisionary** #1, priced $2.95, ships in June.*

*Above: Jim Lee's detailed pencil art for one of his two covers for the first issue of **All Star Batman and Robin the Boy Wonder**. The $2.99 series – which sees the **Batman: Hush** artist and his regular inker Scott Williams join forces with **Batman: The Dark Knight Returns**' Frank Miller for a minimum of six issues – takes a back-to-basics approach to the Gotham hero. It kicks off on July 13 with a retelling of Batman and Robin's first meeting. **All Star Superman**, a companion series featuring a stripped down approach to the Man of Steel by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, follows in August.*

Brenda Starr creator dies at 98

DALE Messick died in Sonoma County, California on April 5 after a long decline that began after a stroke in 1998. She was six days short of her 98th birthday.

Born Dalia Messick in South Bend, Indiana on April 11, 1906, she studied art before starting work for various greetings card companies while developing newspaper strip ideas at night.

Believing her being a woman in a man's world went against her selling her strips, she changed her name to the more gender neutral Dale. More rejections followed until she came up with *Brenda Starr, Reporter*, which began running as a Sunday strip in 1940. At its peak it ran in 250 newspapers and spawned a movie serial and a feature film as well as three **Brenda Starr** comicbooks.

Twice married and divorced, Messick – who received the National Cartoonist Society's Milton Caniff Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997 – retired in 1980, leaving the strip to writer Linda Sutter and ex-Aquaman artist Ramona Fradon. It is now written by Mary Schmich and drawn by June Brigman.

Messick is survived by her daughter and two grandchildren.

● **CI** has learned that Bill Yoshida died on February 17.

Born in December 1921, he was a night club musician and a chef before letterer Ben Oda taught him a new trade.

Occasionally credited as Bill Yosh or Saburo Yoshida, he was Archie's premiere letterer. His output for the humour comics publisher averaged 75 pages a week for 40 years, an approximate total of 156,000 pages.

CI #182 competition winners

IN **CI** #182, one lucky reader was offered the opportunity to receive all seven of Titan Books' **Sin City** trade paperbacks as soon as they are published, plus a copy of **The Art of Sin City**. The winner was:

Clive Goodyer, Silverdale Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6FE

In the issue's second competition, 10 readers had the chance to each win a copy of Twentieth Century Fox's ***Alien vs Predator*** DVD Limited Edition Collector's Box set. These winners were

Chris Askham, Colwick, Notts
Steve Bateman, Otley, Yorks
Robin Datta, Wembley, Middx
Wayne Hughes, Taunton
Anne Ridley, Poole, Dorset
Stephen Rooney, Belfast
Alan Stevenson, Grimsby
Jeff Tiley, Brislington, Bristol
Alice Watts, Westdene, Brighton
Stan Worrell, Aylesbury

Reader votes scored the 10 most popular sections of #182 (and #181) as:

1 (1) News International (22.5%)
2 (2) Film feature (17.2%)
3 (3) Reviews (12.5%)
4 (4) New Roundup (8.8%)
5 (5) Advance Listings (6.3%)
6 (7) NetWorks (6.1%)
7 (6) Sez Dez (5.5%)
8 (10) Talking Shop (5.1%)
9 (12) In the Gutter (4.7%)
10 (8) Frame to Frame (4/6%)

Both competitions received a phenomenal response, the best we've seen for years. It's a shame that resident compmeister Carlie didn't appreciate all the extra hours she had to spend adding up your votes!

The highest scorer as the least popular was the usual gratifying "None, they're all fine" with a fantastic 30.3% (and 34% for #181). Novel Graphics went over all your heads again though, with 14% and 11.7% against!

In Brief

IN A policy-busting move, Marvel is to publish what can only be described as an original graphic novel.

The New York-based publisher, which has staunchly refused to release such has cancelled its **Combat Zone: True Tales of GIs in Iraq** five-parter and will, instead, collect the material commissioned for the mini in an as-yet unscheduled trade paperback. Written by war correspondent Karl Zinsmeister and pencilled by Dan Jurgens, the series was originally to have premiered in December.

PLASTIC Man writer artist Kyle Baker is to self-publish a black and white series chronicling the life and death of the celebrated black activist who led the 1831 revolt of slaves in America.

Premiering in June from Kyle Baker Publishing, the $3 **Nat Turner** miniseries is described by the cartoonist as "like *Glory*, except if Morgan Freeman got hanged and skinned at the end."

VIZ MEDIA is the new corporate entity created by the merger of Viz and ShoPro Entertainment.

The San Francisco-based company will continue to offer anime, manga and other Japanese pop culture material. Shogakukan and Shueisha each own 40% of Viz Media while Shogakukan Production has a 20% stake.

DC HAS gone back to press with its 80-page **Countdown to Infinite Crisis**.

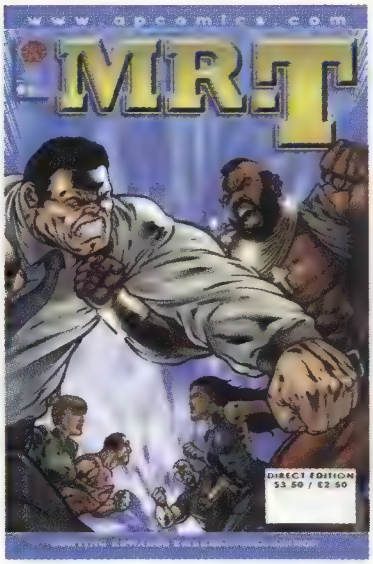
The second edition of the $1.99 one-shot features the original's Jim Lee/Alex Ross cover but recoloured so the identity of the dead hero in Batman's arms is apparent. The new printing is available now.

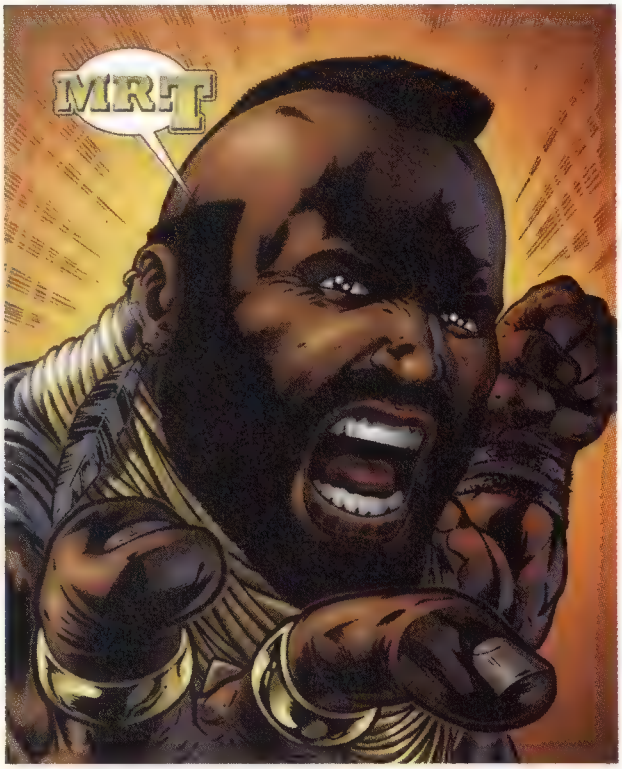
ARCHER and Armstrong, Dr Mirage, Ninjak, Rai and Shadowman have a new owner.

John Taddeo – who had previously tried and failed to acquire CrossGen's properties – purchased them along with such other Valiant Comics characters as Bloodshot, Eternal Warrior, Harbinger and X-O Manowar at the post bankruptcy auction of Acclaim's assets on April 12. The former Marvel marketing manager reportedly bid $200,000 for the entire portfolio, which excludes, Magnus, Solar and Turok, as they were licensed and are owned by Classic Media.

However, it is not yet certain whether Taddeo has clear title to the characters. Post sale it emerged that a new company, Valiant Intellectual Properties, registered trademarks for 12 of the main heroes on March 31 claiming that Acclaim had allowed them to lapse.

Preview: AP Comics Mr T





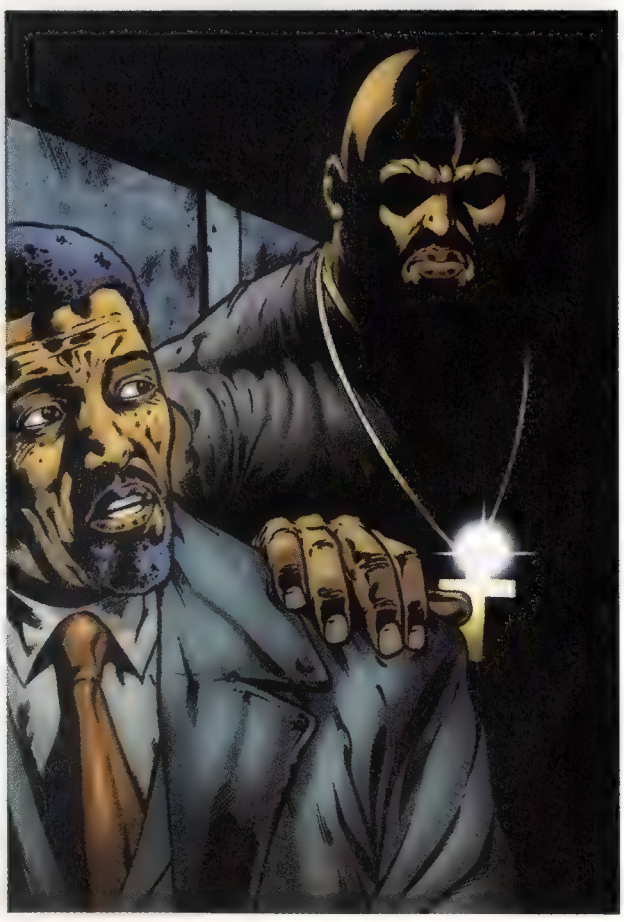
APC is launching its latest licensed title, **Mr T.** #1 to retail stores on Mr.T's birthday, May 21st.

It is written by **CI**'s very own Chris *(Webworld)* Bunting – who also writes for Panini's **Action Man**. Pencil art is by **2000 AD**'s Neil Edwards, with inks by Randy Emberlin, best known for his work on **Spider-Man**, **X-Men** and **She-Hulk**. Colourist is Don MacKinnon, last seen in Brian Pulido's **Nightmare World**.

YOU GOING TO HIDE AWAY IN HERE FOR EVER?
YOU MISSIN' SOMETHIN' WHOEVER SET ME UP THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE I GOTTA STAY OFF RADAR
THE ONLY THING THAT SHOULD STAY OFF RADAR IS YOUR EXCUSES. TIME WAS YOU'D BE AFTER THEM. THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE.
YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE WILL HAVE LOST TRUST IN YOU.
IT AIN'T THAT, MAN IT'S I THINK CRIME FIGHTING'S
POINTLESS

With fantastic initial orders, AP's Richard Emms descibes the book as "one of the year's biggest character licenses".

A special full preview edition of **Mr.T** #1 will be available at May's Comic Expo where the company will also be showcasing several new titles including **The Gloom** and **The Lexian Chronicles**. **Mr. T** #1 ships with a 1:10 sketch cover variant that is available to retailers with initial orders only.



R. Crumb at the National Film Theatre

The Guardian Lecture
Report by **GREG ROWLAND**

IT'S ALWAYS exciting to see your favourite comicbook characters in the flesh. Of course it's usually an unemployed actor under the mask. And they generally lack super-powers, unless you count a steroid-driven genital shrinkage ability.

But seeing the legendary R.Crumb at **The Guardian** National Film Theatre lecture was entirely different. While the details of his trouser-packet need not be rehearsed here (see Terry Zwigoff's excellent *Crumb* documentary for further alarming details) it was nevertheless a strange wonder to see the man in the flesh.

But the word 'flesh' doesn't really describe him. R.Crumb is a thing of taut wires, held together by a snappy boho suit and terabytes of nervous energy. A jolly curmudgeon, Crumb eased the slightly nervous interviewer, **The Guardian**'s political cartoonist Steve Bell with his trademark bitter warmth. This was Crumb in all his bizarre complexity, familiar from his autobiographical works: the nicest weirdo-pervert you could ever hope to meet, the kind of warped sicko you'd be happy to take home to your Mom.

The problem with the event was that most of the audience were nice **Guardian** liberal media types, and probably not very comic or cartoon literate. In fact you could spot the comics people a mile away. At this point I should take the opportunity to apologise once again to the older hippie gentlemen sitting next to me, whom I unfortunately 'zip-whipped' with my jacket when I removed it. It was really hot in there. And, apart from necessitating the removal of my jacket, the heat made the event seem more on edge, more unpredictable, as though we were trawling the fetid swamp of the Great Man's libido.

Bell and Crumb were a bizarre couple. Bell is a great bearded bear, full of generous diaphragmatic laughter, absolutely opposed to the wiry Crumb skeleton that threatens to disturb any normal definition of corporeality. It was clear that Bell's gross physicality made Crumb uncomfortable at times. "Can we move the chairs a little further apart?" asked Crumb as Bell's knee drifted dangerously close to his own.

Steve Bell was understandably a little over-awed at first, and scrimmaged around topics such as nib sizes and early Fleischer cartoons. He asked Crumb to show us how he held a pen – and Crumb exalted a world-weary "Awww c'mon! I hold it just like anybody else!"

They projected some of Crumb's art on a big screen, which wasn't really the best way to show his stuff. Again, it seemed as though **The Guardian** had decided to educate an innocent audience who may had heard of Hogarth but wouldn't know Basil Wolverton from Basil Brush.

Crumb, meanwhile, was defensive about his hard-edged satire on racist representations (Angel Food McSpade), acknowledging that this material was just too hot to handle these days and was charmingly embarrassed by his anal-obsessed strips. Incidentally, I should note that the name 'R.Crumb' is translated as 'rectum' by the Microsoft Word Spellchecker. That's some kind of extreme bum-fixated digital synchronicity.

After a while, Aline Crumb joined the show and the atmosphere lightened considerably. Aline is quite amazing: she looks exactly as she draws herself, right down to those strange wavy lines that coruscate though her hair. Aline likes to play the Jewish huckster and performed a great spiel as she flogged the **R.Crumb Handbook**. The Crumbs make a great double-act: like a kinky-bohemian Richard and Judy. Now there's a daytime TV show that I'd like to see.

"I've been preparing for this for weeks, worrying about it."
...Steve Bell

"Man, that's pathetic."
...R. Crumb

The Q&A session was pretty scary. Paul Gambaccini launched in with his first question. It reminded me of the old Marxist study groups I attended 20 years ago – except of course Gambo wanted to draw the conversation towards Carl Barks, rather than Leon Trotsky. And got a grilling when he proudly announced that he had been reading **American Splendor** since the first issue. "Oh, that was hip of you" snarled Crumb, probably reacting against Gambo's nationality. We all laughed nervously. I decided I wasn't going to ask a question.

So it was a memorable night. I was totally captivated by seeing this cheerful cartoon misanthrope on stage. Crumb looks like the first human being to be entirely made of inky cross-hatching. He is truly hip, in a unique way that subsequent generations will never be able to emulate. His elevation to 'art' status is thoroughly justified.

But we don't need the reassuring liberal whisperings of **The Guardian** to tell us that. We knew it all along…

MOORE REPPION BURNS BARLEY FABRY HOLGUIN McCREA TALBOT DAVISON
Guests include: STRACZYNSKI DAVIS GIBBONS CASEY PLOOG MACK DEMING BISLEY FRANK CAREY SHARP CHURCHILL BRAITHWAITE JOCK GOOGE PARKHOUSE BLYTHE SPENCER MILLIDGE
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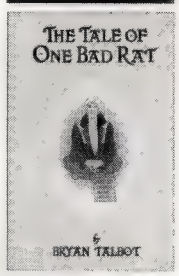

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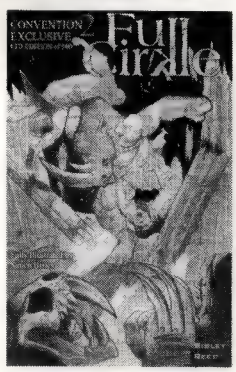

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Book Report

FORMER **Daredevil** and **Green Arrow** writer Kevin Smith's thoughts on comics, Hollywood and more are on offer in the 352-page **Silent Bob Speaks: The Collected Writings of Kevin Smith**.

Published by Titan Books on May 23, the £9.99 softcover also offers the filmmaker's insight into the making of his own movies, among them *Chasing Amy*, *Dogma* and *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*. It collects his commentaries for such print magazines as **Arena**, **Details** and **New Jersey Monthly** as well as for on-line outlets including his own ***moviepoopshoot.com***.

TWOMORROWS is commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Justice League of America with a 224-page black and white softcover that traces the team's history, development, imitators and its own early fandom through vintage and all-new interviews with the series' creators.

The 8½x11" **Justice League Companion** vol 1 also features an issue-by-issue index of the JLA's 1960-1972 adventures alongside conversations with such luminaries as Dennis O'Neil, Murphy Anderson, Mike Friedrich and ex-DC editorial director Carmine Infantino.

The profusely illustrated $24.95 volume, shipping on July 20, even includes an interview with Stan Lee.

SHIPPING from TwoMorrows a week later is **Swampmen**, a 200-page volume that chronicles the history of such creatures as Swamp Thing, Man-Thing, It, the Swamp Lurker and others from the coming of The Heap, the archetypal shambling swamp monster, in 1945 onwards.

Written by **Comic Book Artist** editors Jon B Cooke and George Khoury, the black and white softcover is subtitled **Muck-Monsters of the Comics**. Heavily illustrated with much rarely-seen and never-before-published artwork, the $24.95 book features exhaustive discussions with such writers and artists as Alan Moore, Steve Gerber and Mike Ploog.

SPIDER-GIRL writer Tom DeFalco has two £14.99 books set to hit the streets to tie-in with the July 22 UK premiere of the *Fantastic Four* movie.

As well as Titan's previously announced 256-page **Comic Creators on the Fantastic Four**, the former Marvel editor-in-chief also has written a 12½x10½" hardcover, the 144-page **Fantastic Four: The Ultimate Guide**, the latest in the *Ultimate Guide* series from Dorling Kindersley.

... news round up... news round up... news round up... news round

No more $2.25 comics from Marvel

MARVEL'S solicitations for June-shipping titles do not include any $2.25 comics.

Although the company has made no announcement of a price hike, many of its more popular titles – **Amazing Spider-Man**, **Marvel Team-Up**, **New Avengers**, **Ultimate Fantastic Four**, **Ultimate Spider-Man**, **Ultimate X-Men**, **Uncanny X-Men**, **Wolverine** and **X-Men** – are all now listed at $2.50.

Flare goes monthly

HEROIC Publishing is increasing the frequency of its flagship title from eight times a year to monthly as of #26.

The seventh issue of **Flare** since the series' 2004 relaunch as a $2.99 comic is written by Walter Hill and illustrated by Gordon Purcell, J Walter Adams and Terry Pallot. It ships on July 27 with #27 following on August 31.

Marvel axe falls on Rogue

CANCELLATION is looming for one of Marvel's more recent **X-Men** spin-offs.

Rogue is being axed with #12, which features a cover by Scot Eaton *[left]*. Written by Tony Bedard and pencilled by Karl Moline, the $2.99 series concludes on June 15 although the repercussions from its storyline will be echoed across the pages of **X-Men** and **Uncanny X-Men** over the following six months.

Both writer and artist have new projects in the pipeline although Marvel declined to provide any details.

Slight delay for Green Lantern

WHILE the penultimate issue of DC's $2.95 **Green Lantern: Rebirth** six-parter has been pushed back to April 6 from February 23 and its conclusion from March 23 to May 11, the delays have only affected the relaunch of **Green Lantern** by a week.

The revised ship date for the $3.50 40-page first issue of the new $2.99 series is May 25. It is written by Geoff (**JSA**) Johns and drawn by Carlos Pacheco and Jesus Merino, whose credits include **Avengers Forever** and **Arrowsmith**. Johns also wrote **Green Lantern: Rebirth**, drawn by his **Flash: Iron Heights** partner, Ethan Van Sciver.

Trigger pulled

VERTIGO is cancelling a series created by writer Jason Hall and artist John Watkiss with #8. The final $2.99 issue of **Trigger** ships on July 20.

Dark Horse in state of Aeon Flux

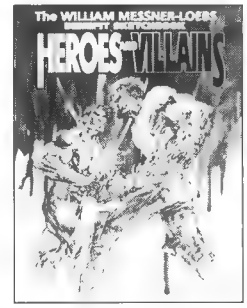
LONE Wolf 2100 writer Mike Kennedy is writing a Dark Horse four-parter that bridges the gap between MTV's animated *Aeon Flux* series and the currently in production live action feature film in which *Monster*'s Charlize Theron plays the show's futuristic heroine *[see left]*.

Currently pencilled in to launch in August, **Aeon Flux: Ersatz Terminus** is drawn by Timothy Green, whose credits include **Swamp Thing** and DC Focus's **Fraction**. Setting the stage for the movie, which premieres in the US in September, the mini follows the sexy freedom fighter as she schemes to turn Bregnan's latest weapon against the city – an ostensibly idyllic utopia that shelters the last humans. But Flux is also training a new secret agent and Sithandra may not be all that she appears.

Creators rally around former Flash writer

JOURNEY creator William Messner-Loebs has fallen on hard times.

After years without work, the Inkpot Award-winning artist/writer has ended up living in a Salvation Army shelter. To make matters worse, his wife is chronically ill and the couple have no medical insurance and no funds coming in. Responding to his plight, leading comics creators have joined forces with TwoMorrows Publishing to produce the 8½x11" **Heroes And Villains**, a 96-page sketchbook and tribute to the former **Flash** and **Wonder Woman** writer that ships on July 13. Among the many artists contributing to the black and white softcover are Mike Allred, Gene Colan, Alan Davis, Dean Haspiel, Andy Kubert, Joe Quesada, Walt Simonson and Herb Trimpe. Neil Gaiman, Peter David and Beau Smith are each producing prose pieces for the $24.95 volume, which features a cover by Neal Adams *[above]*. All proceeds from the book, which is subtitled **The William Messner-Loebs Benefit Sketchbook**, will be used to directly benefit the Messner-Loebs.



Grinning Man comes to Silent Hill

IDW IS continuing its line of spin-offs from Konami's hugely popular ***Silent Hill*** computer game with another one-shot written by the franchise's regular scribe, Scott Ciencin.

The 48-page **Silent Hill: The Grinning Man** spotlights State Trooper Robert Tower. After 10 uneventful years patrolling the cursed town, he's getting ready to retire when he crosses paths with the terrifying Grinning Man and begins a fight for his life.

The $7.49 comic is drawn by Nick Stakal, artist on IDW's current **Containment** five-parter. It ships in May.

Marvel changes its ratings, again

MARVEL is changing its ratings for the second time since it withdrew from the Comics Code Authority in 2002.

The new designations are:

- All Ages – Appropriate for readers of all ages.
- T+ Suggested for teen and up – 13+ years old; appropriate for most readers, parents are advised they may want to read before or with younger children.
- Parental Advisory – 15+ years old; similar to T+; suggested for teen

... people in the news... people in

THE Darkness/Superman's Tyler Kirkham has signed a three-year exclusive contract with Top Cow.

The artist is currently pencilling **The Tenth: Darkk Dawn**, a $4.99 48-pager that reveals the origin of Tony Daniels' monstrous hero. Written by James Bonny and Daniels, the one-shot ships in June. Kirkham then moves on to **V.I.C.E.**. Scheduled to premiere later this year, the spin-off from Mark Waid and Marc Silvestri's **Hunter-Killer** is written by **The Proximity Effect**'s Aaron Coleite.

MONTY Sarhan has been named publisher and chief executive officer of the new owners of **Cracked**.

The successful entrepreneur and attorney heads up Cracked Entertainment, Inc a new company formed by a consortium of investors to acquire the long-running **MAD Magazine** clone.

The acquisition marks a new chapter in **Cracked**'s history and a return of the magazine's operations to New York. The new owners plan to revive **Cracked** through a complete redesign, a new editorial focus and an eventual return to publishing the magazine on a monthly basis. Although no details have been divulged, it is understood that the revamp will break with **Cracked**'s traditional illustrated format and move to it becoming a full-colour glossy featuring a wider mix of material.

FORMER Marvel editor-in-chief Tom DeFalco has been hired to fill the same position on **Cracked**.

Joining the **Spider-Girl** writer on the magazine as

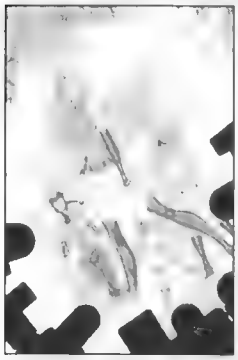
up... news round up... news round up... news round up... news round

and up, but featuring more mature themes and/or more graphic imagery. Recommended for teen and adult readers.

● MAX: Explicit Content - 18+ years old; most Mature Readers books will fall under the MAX Comics banner – created specifically for mature content titles. MAX and mature-themed titles will continue to be designed to appear distinct from mainline Marvel titles, with the MAX: Explicit Content label very prominently displayed on the cover. MAX titles will not be sold on the newsstand and they will not be marketed to younger readers.

The new system kicks in with June-shipping comics.

Double Fool's Gold in July



TODD Nauck is bringing back his "Made-for-TV" superhero team in **Fool's Gold**, an Image miniseries that begins and ends in July.

Explaining the reasons behind the move, the writer/artist declared, "Summer is the best time for comics! It's fun to get a double dose of a favourite title. I remember when **X-Men** and **Spider-Man** went biweekly in the summers of the late '80s. That really got me into comic shops because there was something for me to devote my attention to. I couldn't miss a chapter."

"This new **Wildguard** story is a two-issue mini and most of the work has been done," he explained. "So I decided to try and capture some of that Summer fun by giving readers as little time to wait between issues as possible."

Adams replaces Cockrum

CONTINUING ill-health has forced Dave Cockrum to drop out of Marvel's 30th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the new X-Men.

The Joss Whedon written story that the artist was drawing for the 80-page **Giant-Size X-Men** #3 – which ships on May 25, priced $4.99 – is now being penciled by Neal Adams, who will also ink the strip along with some of his Continuity Studio associates.

AP offers Abiding Perdition

A RELATIVE newcomer, inker Nick Schley, is writing a four-parter for St Albans-based AP Comics.

Set to launch in August, the $3.50/£2.50 **Abiding Perdition** is drawn by Pedro Delgado, another newcomer.

"When I first started writing Perdition," Schley explained, "I wanted the morality of the old Grimm fairy tales to stay intact. The bedrock of this miniseries, as well as future series planned, is actually based more around Norse Mythos with only a splash of fairytale characters we all know and love, or hate, as it were. But there will definitely be some 'recognisable' instances from familiar tales."

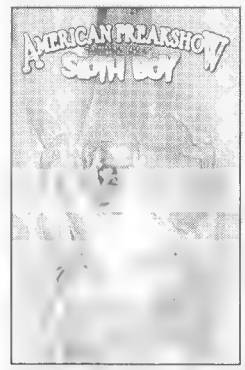
Catwoman gets new team

AS OF June 22, **H-E-R-O**'s Will Pfeiffer and former **Robin** artist Pete Woods are the new **Catwoman** creative team. The pair come on board the $2.50 DC title with #44.

Victoria's other secrets

LINED up for an autumn launch through Alias, **The Tenth Muse** creator/writer Darren G. Davis's **Victoria's Secret Service** tells of a young American girl who is co-opted into a covert organisation, one that was established by Queen Victoria to protect the Empire.

Niles unveils his American Freakshow



THE WRITER many cite as the master of modern comicbook horror is to tell *The Terrible Tale of Sloth Boy* in an IDW three-parter that follows the title character through his brutal and warped existence, beginning with his days as a sideshow freak and continuing on through his attempt at normalcy in the bowels of a Florida trailer park.

The $3.99 **American Freakshow**, which reunites **30 Days of Night** creator Steve Niles with Chee, his singularly-named **Dawn of the Dead** art partner, premieres in May.

"This is based on about two or three true life freakshow stories that I've been obsessed with for years – some small, some larger. I sort of combined them into one big, twisted, freaky ass story, hence the title," stated Niles. "And I hope people dig the pseudo-documentary style Chee and I have put together. This one is a very odd tale. I got a little freaked out writing it, to be perfectly honest."

DC drops second Euro line

DC IS not only dropping the **2000 AD** graphic novels line in June *[see page 22]*, it is also ceasing distribution of the Humanoids titles that it began last August a month before it debuted its first **2000 AD** books.

The last of Humanoids European-originated titles to ship from the publisher are to be **The Incal** volume 2: **The Epic Journey** and **Transgenesis** volume 1: **Ancestor Program**.

British Bulldog gets relaunch

After 12 years in the driving seat, **Bulldog Adventure Magazine** founder Jason Cobley is handing over the editorial reins on the black and white anthropomorphic comic now known as **BAM**.

The A4 format small press title is being relaunched under the direction of Stephen Prestwood, who is to debut his first issue [#28] at the Comics Expo being held in Bristol over the weekend of May 14-15.

Also lined up for the event is the first issue of **Bulldog: Empire**, a US comicbook-sized three parter, which, says Cobley, serves as both a sequel to and a creative reboot of the alternate world adventures of Captain Winston Bulldog as recounted in **BAM**.

Empire is drawn by **Dumbass Comics**' Neill Cameron and written by Cobley, who said, "We have a clear character arc for Bulldog here. The working class hero who has had to fight to gain his status in the military. Winston Bulldog, has bitter memories of his father, thought missing in action many years ago. These feelings are brought to the fore when, out of the blue, the arrival of an unusual train brings with it a ghost from the past. At the same time, he has to break in a new airship crew and contend with rampaging robots and what can only be described as an existential threat from a very unlikely source..."

the news... people in the news...

associate publisher is another ex-Marvel staffer, Sven Larsen, who was the comicbook publisher's director of marketing and creative services in the early 1990s, subsequently worked for Penguin Books and the Time Warner Book Group.

Completing the current round of **Cracked** hirings is Justin Droms. Previously with Scholastic Books, he has been named associate editor.

IDW Publishing has hired Dan Taylor as editor.

The writer is the co-creator of GeekPunk's self-published **Hero Happy Hour**, which was titled **Super Hero Happy Hour** until Marvel and DC jointly complained about trademark infringement.

THE NEW York Post is reporting that wrestler Terry Bollea can no longer promote himself as Hulk Hogan.

The **Post** states Bollea, who had licensed the 'Hulk' name from Marvel, has been using the name illegally since breaking with World Wrestling Entertainment [WWE]. According to the paper, as of Friday, March 25 he must revert to his Hollywood Hogan stage name.

Conversely **ProWrestling Insider** is claiming Marvel sold Bollea the rights to the 'Hulk' sobriquet on February 1. It speculates that this was part of a settlement when the publisher's trademark infringement suit against the wrestler was dismissed last September.

The magazine also reports that the WWE is currently advertising Hulk Hogan in connection with its forthcoming Wrestlemania 21 Hall of Fame event.

round up... news round up... news round up... news round up... news

Manga bulletins

As traditionally published in Japan, all manga titles are in a 5¼x6" digest format, in black and white and read from right to left unless otherwise stated.

CMX HAS run into considerable criticism from manga fans after heavily censoring its 176-page first volume of Oh! great's **Tenjho Tenge**.

The series, which is currently appearing in Japan's **Ultra Jump**, contains graphic sex including rape and full nudity alongside its often graphic violence.

The DC imprint, which launched claiming to offer "...pure manga – 100% the way the original Japanese creators want you to see it", has edited and cropped the art or added sound effects and underwear to cover up the nudity and minimise the more graphic elements of the story.

WHILE the controversy still rages over DC/CMX's decision to censor **Tenjho Tenge**, Viz has chosen to place stars over the nipples Masakazu Katsura revealed in the first volume of his curiously-named **I"s**.

Intended for older readers, the title is one of the first from Viz's recently-launched *Shonen Jump Advanced* imprint.

Referring to the sanitising of Katsura's art, a spokesperson for Viz stated, "Any – very minimal – edits done to any manga title are to fit the criteria of audiences in the US and we follow and respect the wishes of the creator to the letter, as we did in this instance.

"There are never, at any time, any edits done without the creator's full knowledge and approval," he added, noting that Katsura utilised stars over the women's breasts in volume 3 of the Japanese edition of **I"s**.

TOKYOPOP is to publish an English language edition of **Wolverine Snikt!** artist Tsutomu Nihei's post-apocalyptic manga, **Blame!**, with the 192-page first quarterly volume set for publication on August 9, priced $9.99.

"None of the pages will be censored like DC did with **Ten Ten [Tenjho Tenge]**," editor Luis Reyes stated. "Tokyopop does not have a reputation for censoring at all. There were two instances on the **Initial D** series (volumes 1 and 9) in which we partially covered something on approval from the Japanese publisher.

He continued, "However, since then, we have never been in the practice of censoring books with the possible exception of **Tokyo Tribes**, which was actually censored by the artist himself boldly as a kind of statement against the fact that otherwise we'd have to sell his book shrink-wrapped."

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Mike Conroy's Frame to Frame

Examining the latest developments between films and comics

WHAT are they doing to Zatanna? If the DC magic wielder, who casts her incantations by speaking backwards, isn't already disillusioned, she soon will be.

Starting off way back in 1964's **Hawkman** #4, she was one of the less illustrious of DC's Silver Age reinventions of its Golden Age heroes. She was just a fishnet tights-wearing female clone of her father, Zatarra, the tuxedo-clad magician created by Fred Guardineer who introduced him in the 1938 first issue of **Action Comics**, where his strip ran until 1950.

Nowhere near as high profile as her parent, who also had his own series in **Worlds Finest Comics** throughout the 1940s, Zatanna remained a bit-player in the DC Universe for almost 15 years. She'd had short-lived backup slots in **Adventure Comics** and the first **Supergirl** series but it wasn't until she joined the JLA that she gained any real credibility.

The winner of a fan poll to decide the team's next member, she joined in **Justice League of America** #161 [1978] although she immediately dropped the eye candy outfit of short tuxedo and tights in favour of a more traditional superhero costume... maybe because Black Canary already held the JLA franchise for fishnet pantyhose.

By 1987 Zee was out of the League and reverted to her original costume – which she also wore in her everyday role as a stage magician – and reduced to backups and guest star roles. Four years later she appeared in the second issue of the pre-Vertigo **Books of Magic**, paving the way for her to become as much a player in the mature readers realm inhabited by Swamp Thing, **Hellblazer**'s John Constantine et al as she had been in the more innocuous DC Universe that birthed her.

Childlike throwback

But throughout her career, it appears nobody really knew how to handle her. On the one hand her powers had the potential to make her one of the most powerful heroes in the DC Universe. On the other her spell-casting method is a somewhat childlike throwback to a more innocent age.

It seems nobody could treat Zatanna Zatara (to give her her full name) seriously. Most shied away from giving her any kind of personality or depth although Paul Dini tried to flesh her out a bit in **Zatanna: Every Day Magic**, a 2003 Vertigo one-shot in which he revealed Zee had had a 'relationship' with Constantine.

Now Grant Morrison has got his hands on her for one of his forthcoming **Seven Soldiers of Victory** minis, which could be good for Zee's image. But so has Hollywood, which looks bad... very bad.

Ice Princess scribe Hadley Davis is writing the script for a proposed *Zatanna* movie. It's being produced by Denise DiNovi whose credits might include the execrable *Catwoman* but also include *Batman Returns* and, just as relevant, *Practical Magic*, the 1998 film in which Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman played sisters who were modern-day witches.

What's worrying, however, is not so much Davis's apparent disregard of not only everything that's ever been established about Zee – who's a mature woman in DC continuity – as it is her complete and utter indifference to same. "It's sort of an obscure DC comicbook. Well, I say that, and then people who know comicbooks know the comic. It has existed for years and years, but she is a female magician. It's for Warner Brothers and [producer] Denise DiNovi and we've made her sort of a teen magician."

> **"[Compared with Batman, Zatanna] is more comedic and kind of tweeny, teen-oriented."**
>
> *...Hadley Davis, scriptwriter*

Obscure DC comicbook? What are we missing? And as for making her a teen magician...

It's one of the more puzzling aspects of the Hollywood system. Why buy an obscure property and then throw everything but the name away when there's another property that not only fits your template but also is already a recognisable name to your target audience.

So was Sabrina, the Teenage Witch out of your price bracket and you could only afford Zatanna? Or maybe Sabrina wasn't available and you really had to have a teenage witch. So, create your own!

Surely that would be no more – and conceivably even less – risky that trying to build a movie around a licensed character who's had so many different personas it's a wonder she's not schizophrenic.

Magically challenged

Getting back to Davis's thoughts on the movie, on the difficulty of creating sufficiently impressive obstacles for her to overcome, she said, "The challenge with that is that magic is a challenging thing to do in a script. If someone is magical, they can do anything: They can solve any problem you might put in their way. So you have to create the rules of the world and it's a completely different kind of challenge." (Likes that word, doesn't she?)

She also said *Zatanna* would differ greatly from Warner Bros' other comics related movies, "It's more comedic and kind of tweeny, teen-oriented. It is really different in tone than the things that they've been bringing out."

No shit, Sherlock.

Twisted Tales

Chatting with Todd McFarlane t'other week (as one does), I learned that he's now looking to produce – read fund – the second *Spawn* movie himself.

Apparently he couldn't get any of the major production companies interested once they learned of the direction he's insisting on going in. He doesn't want to make a sequel. He wants to reinvent Spawn as an enigma, a bogeyman who never speaks rather than a superhero from Hell with an origin and all the trappings.

In the meantime, he's developing an anthology series for Fox TV that has the working title of *Twisted Tales*. He believes, this will fill what he perceives as a hole in the market. He says that, with horror movies such as *Boogeyman* and *The Forgotten* doing so well in cinemas, there's nothing comparable on television and he wants to rectify that.

The writer/artist is also looking to host the show but he's not entirely forgetting his comicbook roots. He says he's looking to the looming **Spawn** #150 as an opportunity to relaunch the comic.

Once the industry's top-selling title, it now lan-guishes at #79 in Diamond's latest Top 300 chart.

In the Spirit of Eisner

In 1987, *Flash Gordon*'s Sam Jones portrayed Denny Colt (aka the Spirit) in a made-for-TV movie.

The Spirit was a pilot for a series that didn't get picked up. While it didn't capture the full depth and atmosphere of the Will Eisner strips upon which it was based, it wasn't, by all accounts, that bad.

Maybe Jeph Loeb will do even better. The **Batman: The Long Halloween** writer is developing the screenplay for a big screen outing by the Spirit. The movie project, which was approved by Eisner shortly before his death earlier this year, is being produced by Batfilms' Michael Uslan and Odd Lot's Gigi Pritzker and Deborah Del Prete, who were responsible for last year's *Hooligans*, which starred Elijah Wood.

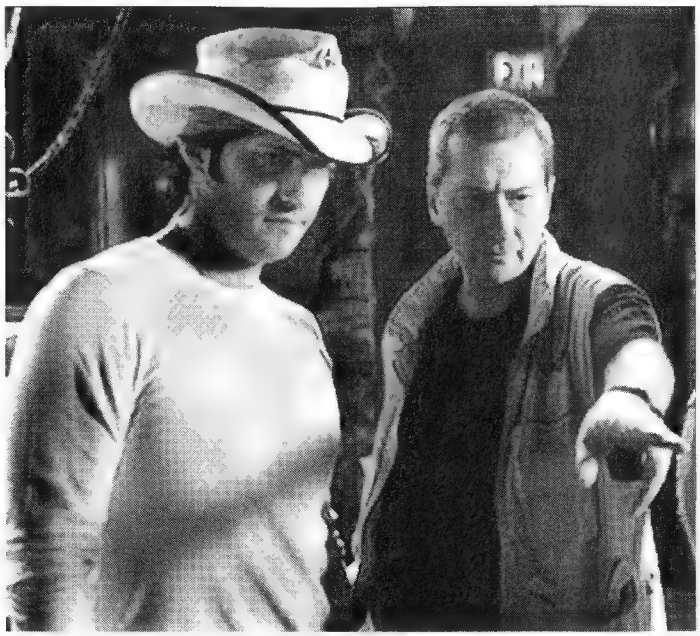
Loeb, who is consulting producer on *Smallville*, is also working on a **Spirit** graphic novel with his frequent collaborator, artist Tim Sale.

And finally...

The Mirror's review of *Constantine* included this double gaff, "based on the British comic, **Hellboy**".

Sigh. We've still got a long way to go.

Frame to Frame Review



Sin City: More like the comic than the comic

Frame to Frame guest review by KELVIN GREEN

This film has one fatal flaw. It's perfect.

Huh?

Well, the thing with *Sin City* the movie is that it's an amazingly faithful adaptation of the original comics, so much so that – for comics readers – it renders itself utterly pointless. Why watch it on the big screen if it's exactly the same as what you've already read? That's what I couldn't help asking myself and anyone else who'd listen.

That's not to say that *Sin City* is a bad film, because in fact it's superb. It's just that it's hard to judge how good the film is when it presents the source material in such a way. Miller's original comics were wonderful, and that's why the film is; it's not really wonderful in its own right.

Top: Frank Miller, writer/artist/director, at work on Sin City, *the movie. Above: Out of the bevy of beautiful broads the picture boasts, our dear editor would have killed if we'd missed out his favourite, Devon Aoki as the menacing Miho.*

The characters are wonderfully written, but that's all from Miller. The imagery is beautiful and exciting, but that's from Miller, too. Even the voices of the characters don't surprise; comics don't have sound, but Miller's writing was so evocative that you still heard the characters, and these actors sound exactly right. Similarly, Miller's art was so kinetic that to see it on screen isn't as big a shock as it might be.

That said, the sheer achievement in getting Miller's stylised artwork onto the screen is worth congratulating, and there are going to have to be some stupendously impressive films coming out between now and awards season to stop *Sin City* scooping up a bunch of technical and design awards.

The performances are also superb, although Bruce Willis plays himself again and Michael Madsen is generally awful. It's relatively easy to transfer the imagery of the comics to the screen, but to get the characters to feel right is a great deal more tricky. All of the actors do a fine job, but it's Mickey Rourke as Marv who stands out; I'd never have pegged him as doing the role justice, but he manages it with aplomb.

Sin City is a triumph, certainly one of the best comic-based films I've ever seen. It's what 1990's *Dick Tracy* was getting at, and what Ang Lee struggled towards with *The Hulk*.

Whereas *X-Men* pruned away much of its comics bits in order to make the concept work on film, *Sin City* just splatts it all up there and shows that a comic-based film can work well, if you just let it true to itself.

RECOGNIZE MY VOICE, HARTIGAN? RECOGNIZE MY VOICE, YOU PIECE-OF-SHIT COP? I LOOK DIFFERENT, BUT I BET YOU CAN RECOGNIZE MY VOICE. I'D BE REALLY INSULTED IF YOU DIDN'T RECOGNIZE MY VOICE.
YOU KEEP HOLDING OUT ON ME LIKE THIS AND I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET REALLY NASTY. I DON'T THINK YOU WANT THAT TO HAPPEN ANY MORE THAN I DO.
IT WAS TELLY STERN PASSED ME THE ORDER RUNS THE TABLES OVER TO THE TRIPLE ACE CLUB.

Above: Deja vu? Recreations from comics frame to screen frame so faithful that they're almost worthy of a spot-the-difference competition.

NOT FOR THE SUPERSTITIOUS!

In May on Friday 13th, the evening before the weekend's Bristol Comic Expo...

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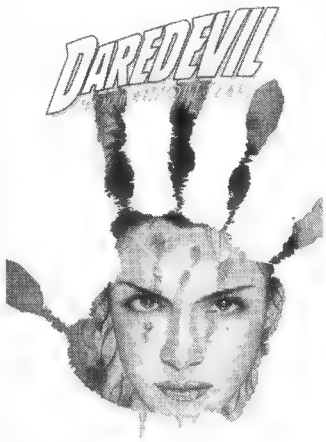

DAVID MACK 6pm

Making his first appearance at a UK comics convention, the **Kabuki** writer/artist whose jump to the mainstream revolutionised the look of Marvel's **Daredevil**.

7pm MIKE OEMING

From **Judge Dredd** to **Thor** via **Hammer of the Gods** and **Powers**. An outspoken writer/artist whose uncompromising approach has set comics on its edge.

8pm J MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI

From New Jersey street kid to "the Tolstoy of Science Fiction", J Michael Straczynski is the multi-award winning author of over 200 episodes of TV, five TV movies, 500 published articles, plus novels, plays, radio dramas... and comics!

Followed by a late, late hotel bar to give you time to network with fellow comics creators. What a great way to start the weekend!

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Here we go again (and again and again)

Talking Shop with Stephen Holland

Reminding people there's a real mainstream out there

Good evening, and welcome to the News at Six Thirty-Six. I'm your host, Stephen L. Holland, and I've already lost the auto-cue.

The news headlines tonight: Publishers Chaos, CrossGen and Dreamwave are bust after overreaching themselves with too many titles, too similar to each other, or relying too heavily on gimmicky covers. And in related news, after mere months in existence, Alias Enterprises offer 16 titles for June, IDW go for 20, and god knows what's happening at Avatar, it's always difficult to tell.

Marvel Comics, who not so long ago filed for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy after over-reaching themselves with too many titles, too little talent and an assault of gimmicky covers, are set to publish 104 comics and trade paperbacks, several of which will boast variants. Who cares about DC? They're owned by Time Warner who have pockets deeper than the Grand Canyon, and will therefore be with us for centuries to come.

But I do care about the others (not like I care about Top Shelf, but in spite of being here for over half a decade of total quality, they're wisely sticking to just one book in June – **Super F*ckers** by James Kochalka), because I don't want to see *any*one go bust. They always end up owing so much money to their hapless creators and trusting printers, and leave their loyal readers halfway through a story. (Parenthetically, have you noticed that every publisher who's so far been involved with **Lady Death** – Chaos, Crossgen – has felt her kiss eventually? What on earth was Avatar thinking?)

> My point to publishers is this: don't overstretch yourselves, and stop fuelling the rarity fire with variant editions.

And I'm an optimistic chappie: two years ago I reported Tokyopop's pull on the ladies (now they have their own UK branch), ten years ago I predicted the rise of the graphic novel (which now accounts for over 60% of Page 45's revenue), and I even put The Blow Monkeys' *Day After You* single on my turntable for two successive General Elections before we finally got rid of the Tories. But I'm not stupid (I voted Lib Dem once Labour leader John Smith expired), and if history repeats itself it's because people fail to learn their lessons.

Take Marvel and DC: at any point one will be in ascendance because they've a bunch of creators they trust and they let them get on with it. A few years down the road they forget that's what's brought them their readers, and the editors begin to interfere. The creators leave, usually for the other team, where their new editors treat them like gold. For a while. And then they make the same mistake their competitors did and the exodus starts anew. To take two relative opposites, just look at the careers of John Byrne and Grant Morrison.

When Joe Quesada was appointed editor-in-chief of Marvel after he proved he knew how to get the best out of his creators with the Marvel Knights line (clue: letting them get on with it), he brought in so much talent – from DC and outside (film, TV, and the Real Mainstream of comics like Bendis) – and the company thrived. He also saw that too many titles, too similar to each other and stretching creative resources too thinly, wasn't conducive to healthy sales, so he started culling them even in the sacred mutant family. Yet here we go again: too many titles, all too similar and therefore appealing to the same limited pool of readers. Are they seriously expecting fans to triple their spending?

Page 45 hasn't quadrupled its income over the last ten years by asking the same customers to fork out four times the amount of money they've been used to spending. They've bought houses, got married and had babies since then! No, it's through all the new and different people we've lured into the shop with all the new and different material now on offer and, well... got them addicted. That's why we're all called "dealers".

Tokyopop's situation is different. Yes, there's now one hell of a lot of books out every month, which for us is a bit of a headache, but they do have a vast reservoir of potential readers out there who, historically, have not been catered for by the Western comics – girls, for a start. So it'll be a while before that market is saturated. Potential superhero readers? Pretty much all snapped up years ago. Potential yaoi readers? Barely scratched the soft-skinned surface.

Even a single creator can overdo it. Steve Niles, when sticking to his **30 Days of Night** and Cal McDonald horror series, shot to prominence almost overnight and sales soared. After which, the deluge, sweeping half the readers away in its wake.

My point to publishers is this: don't overstretch yourselves, and stop fuelling the rarity fire with variant editions. Along with retailer greed (and it remains to be seen if we've learned *our* lesson), that caused the comicbook implosion 12 years ago.

Most sane retailers are going to go for variety over more of the same, and when there's a new title like Andi Watson's **Little Star** coming in (at last, at comic about parenthood! – what took us so long?), that's the one that'll get priority with our limited shelf space. Saner by far is DC's approach. There's still the predictable resurrections of old ideas and bombardment of Bat titles, but along with Vertigo, Wildstorm and the new Euro stuff they give us animal rights (**We3**), sci-fi action (**Global Frequency**) and crime/romance.

So, a reminder of main news tonight, last night, last year, the year before that: Publisher Over-Expands And Goes Tits-Up.

Now the weather forecast: an early wave of ill-founded over-optimism, currently making its way across the Atlantic, will give way sooner or later to a more overcast outlook, followed by intermittent spells of the jitters and a band of high (blood) pressure, culminating in a downpour of tears and a storm of recrimination.

Drive safely, now.

Stephen Holland runs Page 45, a comic shop in Nottingham, with Mark Simpson and Tom Rosin.

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We are also looking for runs of – Spawn/Authority/Cable/Catwoman/Thunderbolts and many others. Please contact us on 020 7836 5630 if you have any of the titles listed.

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Enki Bilal: Immortal for life

Novel Graphics by Paul Gravett

Highlighting the latest and best in graphic novels

"PERHAPS it's my past that makes me restless, makes me want to keep moving." The son of a Bosnian father and a Czech mother, Enki Bilal spent his first nine years in Belgrade, in the former Yugoslavia, a country in the shadow of communism and still struggling in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Ever since he was young, Bilal had a passion for comics and for the big screen, going every week to the movies, especially his favourites, westerns.

When he was nine, he landed a part in a short film being made in Belgrade. "It was about two street kids wandering around the city. They would stop and sketch out fights in chalk on the pavements, one drawing cowboys, the other Indians. Being a budding actor suddenly expanded my universe." He was a budding cartoonist too, but as luck would have it, he had to leave his homeland before the film was completed. He never found out what happened to it, after he and his family left the troubled city and resettled in 1961 in Paris.

For him, France was a new life, and a new culture, of the cinema and of comics or bandes dessinées. In the early 1970s he found his first calling as a BD artist, when he won a talent competition for the magazine **Pilote**, home since 1959 of Asterix and at the time the cutting edge of the dawning BD revolution. Here and later in **Metal Hurlant** Bilal began to write and draw a series of short SF stories, two books of which have just been collected into one volume of **Memories**, the latest in the good value Bilal Library collections from Humanoids and DC Comics (www.dccomics.com).

His most important collaborator at **Pilote** was renowned writer Pierre Christin. Together they developed a trilogy of contemporary tales of the fantastic, partly social satires, partly chillers inspired by H. P. Lovecraft, set in different present-day cities beset by mysterious forces. These three formative stories are compiled in **Townscapes**.

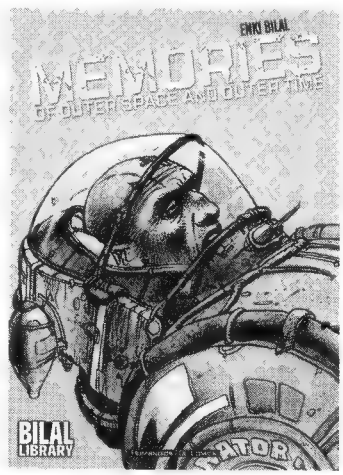
Espionage, regime change, terrorism and resistance were ingredients in Bilal and Christin's later, more politically charged projects, *The Black Order Brigade* and *The Hunting Party* are combined in the book **The Chaos Effect**. Bilal's art evolved a greater sophistication, as he moved away from detailed linework towards more fully painted rendering and a richer colour palette.

Bilal made his greatest breakthrough in comics when he went solo on his first full-length graphic novel **Gods in Chaos** in 1980. Alcide Nikopol is a man who fell to earth, after orbiting in suspended animation, imprisoned in space for desertion. His miserable mortal life alters radically, when he is revived in Paris, injured but unchanged, 20 years later in a world where everyone else has aged. His missing leg is replaced with a metal graft welded by Horus, a naked, falcon-headed alien renegade, who looks like his namesake, the Egyptian god.

Nikopol can no longer call his life or body his own, because Horus needs to possess him to act as his instrument of revenge against his fellow gods, hovering in their pyramid spacecraft above Paris. Global power politics have devolved into a bizarre circus. Inside the body of Nikopol, Horus infiltrates the chambers of the painted governor Choublanc (French for loser) and seizes power in the French capital. Nikopol discovers that his wife, now dead, had a son, now the same age as him and virtually his twin.

***In the early 1970s he found his first calling as a BD artist, when he won a talent competition for the magazine* Pilote...**

Bilal returned to the saga in 1986 with **The Woman Trap**, introducing the exotic femme fatale Jill Bioskop (the Serb word for cinema), a blue-haired reporter of the future with blood on her hands. He eventually completed the saga in 1992 in **Cold Equator**. Bilal's visions reveal a decadent dystopia, overwhelming and baroque, inspired by directors like Andrei Tarkowsky of *Solaris* and *Stalker*. His plotting is dense, unpredictable, and really repays close attention. There is also a dark, absurdist humour, from the freakish make-up of politicians and the striped alien cat Gogol to the world chess-boxing championships.



In all, *The Nikopol Trilogy* took Bilal twelve years to complete, while he pursued his other great obsession and eventual career, film-making. An important break came from Alain Resnais, a great admirer, who gave him the chance to design the poster and some painted glass sets for his films. Another opportunity came in 1983, when director Michael Mann was shooting *The Keep*. Unhappy with the look of the monster, he hired Bilal, because he was familiar with his albums.

Bilal learnt from Mann that all the albums by French BD artists like Druillet, Moebius, Mézières and himself had been lying around in every American film studio. They had been copying from them for years. It's no big secret that George Lucas was heavily influenced in *Star Wars* by the **Valerian** albums (soon to be republished in English by iBooks – see *www.komikwerks.com*) written by Christin and drawn by Mézières, from the look of the Millennium Falcon to the alien bar scene. Moebius and Dan O'Bannon had essentially created much of the mood and style of *Blade Runner* in their collaboration **The Long Tomorrow** years earlier.

Fortunately, directors did start to commission these visionary artists to contribute officially to productions. Bilal was hired to produce preparatory drawings for *The Name of the Rose*, for example. With guidance from Resnais, Bilal went on to direct his first film in 1988, *Bunker Palace Hotel*, rooted in the same sensuous, decadent future of his graphic novels. After making his second feature *Tykho Moon*, Bilal directed his third film last year, his most ambitious and big-budget yet. *Immortel Ad Vivam*, or *Immortal For Life* reinterprets parts of the Nikopol Trilogy and combines live action with blue-screen digital imagery based on his artwork, for the stunningly realised decors, cityscapes and the alien characters, including the alien Egyptian gods.

The film received praise and and performed well in France, when it came out over a year ago. It should have made Bilal's name internationally, and in English especially. Sadly, apart from some festival screenings and a limited Canadian release, it has so far failed to get any proper cinematic general release in the UK or USA. It's tough to compete with the massive Hollywood machine. *Immortel* is already out on DVD, but really deserves to be seen in the cinema. Visit *www.immortel-lefilm.com* to sample the trailer and more.

Back to BD, Bilal's most recent magnum opus is *The Beast Trilogy*, a luscious, challenging psycho-drama about a man with total recall. This came out last year in collected form in the first trilogy that I've ever seen with only the first two parts in it, **The Dormant Beast** and **December 32**. Frustrating, but it will have to do for now, while we wait for him to finish the final part.

Knowing Bilal's restless nature, it won't be long before he is drawn back to his passion for creating comics once again.

PG tips

Yet more mind-opening graphic novels to work their magic on us (and let me add R.I.P. Ted Kord – I'll always treasure reading Ditko's ***Blue Beetle*** *on a 1967 caravan holiday).*

Bolland Strips!
(Brian Bolland; Knockabout/ Palmano-Bennett) May.....£12.99

Back in 1987, Peter Stanbury and I were putting together issue 12 of **Escape** when young Brian steps up to the Fast Fiction table at the Westminster Central Hall Comic Mart and sheepishly offers to show me some of his etchings (nudge, nudge). Now these were not the lavishly crafted fantasy masterpieces for his 2000 AD or DC paymasters. They would not have gone for his (relatively) looser, scratchy style, drawn same-size on typing paper, much less for his balding, overweight, undersexed "hero", Mr. Mamoulian. He'd done these brilliant, funny, surreal 12-panel pages for himself, and they became an **Escape** fixture. Encouraged, Brian did more – 54 before he paused, it seems, permanently. All their pathos, loose ends and dangling plots are compiled here. The star event is a new 20-page Lovecraftian episode of The Actress and the Bishop, plus his episodes for **A1** and two DC shorts. If you only know Bolland from Dredd or Batman, discover how warped he really is in this book. "And it's lovely and big and hard bound", as the Actress said to the Bishop. ***...www.knockabout.com***

Hic Sunt Leones
(various; Bries) May.....e16.00

Here's proof that there's much more to Belgian comics than Tintin in his quiff and plus-fours. Bries is Ria Schulpen's Antwerp-based indie label, where she promotes some of the country's most cutting-edge young talents. With support from the Flemish Literature Fund, Ria has edited this attractively designed 168-page selection box, available in the UK via Red Route. It showcases 15 diverse, dynamic strip creators, together with six illustrators, mostly in lavish full colour and all either in English or wordless.

The range and quality in **Hic Sunt Leones** (Latin for "here are the lions") is impressive but for me, the big revelation is Olivier Schrauwen, whose twisted father-and-son relation-ship is brilliantly cast in the faded charms of Sunday colour "funnies" pages from early 20th century US newspapers. A hot tip: Ria is promising a forthcoming solo album from him later this year.

...www.bries.be

The R Crumb Handbook
(Crumb & Poplaski; MQ Publications) April .....£14.99/$25.00

Less a graphic novel, more of a mini-doorstop of an (auto)biography with new writings, unseen photos, mostly classic art, and a free CD of Crumb's musical endeavours.

For collectors, there is a limited clothbound edition with a signed print for £350, and the Whitechapel Gallery's edition has 16 extra pages: a curator's intro and a listing of the works in display.

And don't miss the small but beautifully formed extra London exhibit, R Crumb Art & Music, on till the end of May (www.bookartbookshop.com or telephone 020 7608 1333).

...www.avodahbooks.com

Advance Listings

READERS: You can use this Advance Listings *section as an order form with your direct market store or mail order supplier. Simply mark the items you require, copy or remove these pages (or list them on a separate piece of paper) and give it to your supplier, together with a note of your name, address and phone number to guarantee not missing any of the new titles being published. Certain suppliers may not accept standing orders, so check with them first. All prices of US titles listed are in dollars. Import prices are usually converted at a rate of $1.00 = 85p UK sterling. Shipping dates given are the earliest date product will reach stores. All dates, prices and information are assumed to be accurate as provided by publishers.* *Compiled by Jim Hannah and Kieron Mullens*

The following are 32 page colour titles unless stated

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JUNE 1

Dark Horse

Blade of the Immortal Volume 14: Last Blood (Hiroaki Samura; tpb) Rin has spent countless days chasing the murderer of her parents, and now she has Anotsu Kagehisa where she wants him, but the deathly ill Anotsu is too sick for the honour-bound Rin to strike down. Mature. 256pg b&w $17.95

Star Wars: Empire 34 *(Sons* 5 of 5; various) Luke Skywalker, whose presence on Jabiim has attracted the attention of none other than Darth Vader, must decide whether to stay and fight and risk everything, or escape and leave the Jabiimi freedom fighters to face Vader's wrath. $2.99

DC Comics

Aquaman 31 (John Arcudi & Patrick Gleason + Christian Alamy) The full wrath of Aquaman comes down on Black Manta! Meanwhile, Aquagirl returns from Atlantis with Koryak, causing Aquaman to question his feelings for two women. $2.50

one-shot **The Ballad of Halo Jones** (Alan Moore & Ian Gibson; tpb) When Halo Jones grows bored with her life in The Hoop – a futuristic world where jobs are scarce and excitement nonexistent – she sets out to see the galaxy any way she can. 200pg b&w $19.99

Batman: Dark Detective 3 (Steve Englehart & Marshall Rogers + Terry Austin) Bruce Wayne's relationship with Silver St. Cloud deepens, and an old, forgotten Batman foe with an eye toward doubling the Gotham Guardian's misery returns! $2.99

Blood of the Demon 4 (John Byrne + Will Pfeifer & Byrne + Nekros) Morgaine Le Fey means to hold Etrigan in thrall as she did in days of old! But since the Demon barely answers to Jason Blood, she might be in for a surprise! $2.50

Detective Comics 807 *(City of Crime* 7 of 12; David Lapham + Scott Beatty & Ramon Bachs + Nathan Massengill + Jeff Parker) Can even Batman infiltrate the forgotten parts of Gotham, where there are no rules? 40pg $2.99

Firestorm 14 (Stuart Moore & Jamal Igle + Rob Stull) Inspired by his encounter with his predecessor, Firestorm is determined to make the most of his life as both Jason and Firestorm. That means a new job at S.T.A.R. Labs, a new apartment, and college. $2.50

The Intimates 8 (Joe Casey & Giuseppe Camuncoli + Sandra Hope, *WildStorm)* Where does Punchy go between semesters? Who are his parents? Who does he hang out with? Does he get any action? Find out all this and more. $2.99

JSA 74 *(Black Vengeance* 2 of 3; Geoff Johns & Leonard Kirk + Keith Champagne) The JSA ventures into Black Adam's homeland, coming face-to-face with the Spirit of Vengeance and the new Eclipso! $2.50

Justice League Unlimited 10 (Adam Beechen & Carlo Barberi + Walden Wong) When the unpredictable Madmen steal a nuclear weapon, the League is helpless. To get it back, the team must turn to someone whose thinking is as off-kilter as its foes. Enter the Creeper. $2.25

Lex Luthor: Man of Steel 4 (Brian Azzarello & Lee Bermejo) After a successful trip to Gotham City – where it appears Batman has sided with Luthor – a new hero emerges from the streets of Metropolis, giving new meaning to the word 'hope' for a man whose only desire is to rid the world of Superman. $2.99

Looney Tunes 127 (various) Hold your breath, because this issue is full of Pépé Le Pew! Meanwhile, surf's up for Bugs, and tides of trouble are coming in for Sam! $2.25

Mad 455 (The Usual Gang of Idiots) This month, MAD points out the humour in popular movies, television, and the less fortunate. 48pg b&w $3.50

Matador 2 (Devin Grayson & Brian Stelfreeze, *WildStorm)* Left in a compromising position by the Matador himself, Isabel begins to lose her way when she finds herself officially relieved from work duties – and unofficially taken under the wing of the local crime lord! $2.99

one-shot **New Teen Titans: Who is Donna Troy?** (Marv Wolfman + Phil Jimenez & various; tpb) Collects The New Teen Titans #38, Tales of the New Teen Titans #50, The New Titans #50-55, Titans/Outsiders Secret Files 2003 and more. 224pg $19.99

Seven Soldiers: Zatanna 2 (Grant Morrison & Ryan Sook + Mick Gray) The Amazons drop off Zatanna and Vicky in Las Vegas where Zatanna is scheduled for a magic show. But they're sidetracked when they meet the old magician Ali Ka-Zoom, the Merlin of the Ghetto, who warns them about the threat of the Sheeda and reveals a prophecy of doom. $2.99

new **Son of Vulcan** 1 (Scott Beatty & Keron Grant) Caught between the Floronic Man, bent on liberating the salad bar from carb-conscious consumers, and Vulcan, a flame-wielding hero determined to sautée the poisonous Plant Master, Mikey may have bitten off more than he can chew. $2.99

Superman 218 (Mark Verheiden & Ed Benes) The introduction of Blackrock – a new villain who makes his presence known when his powers go out of control, Can Superman take him out without becoming a bigger menace to the citizens of Metropolis? $2.50

Swamp Thing 16 *(Healing the Breach* 2 of 4; Joshua Dysart & Enrique Breccia; *Vertigo)* While Swamp Thing battles a strange bio-tech invader in the Green, Professor Schiller gives up his conscious mind and commits to reliving the final days of his relationship with Alec Holland's first wife, Linda. $2.99

The Twilight Experiment 5 (of 6; Jimmy Palmiotti + Justin Gray & Juan Santacruz; *WildStorm)* The Righteous issues a warning to the world: live in peace or die! And in the parallel world of Veridian, the devastating anomaly is reaching critical mass. Will Rene and Twilight be able to avert a pandimensional disaster? $2.99

Villains United 2 (Gail Simone & Dale Eaglesham + Wade von Grawbadger) Six extraordinary criminals stand against DC's heroes and the combined might of Earth's villains, united by the powerful and secretive Society. $2.50

We3 (Grant Morrison & Frank Quitely; *Vertigo;* tpb) Collects the series. Tells the story of three innocent pets – a dog, a cat and a rabbit – who have been converted into deadly cyborgs by a sinister military weapons programme. 104pg ... $12.99

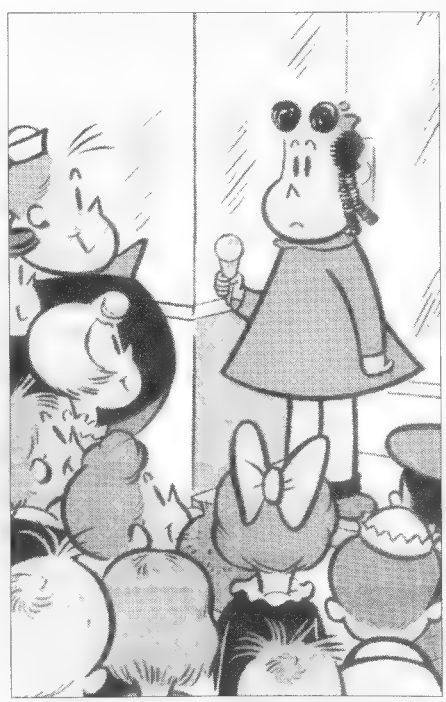
Y: The Last Man 34 *(Girl on Girl* 3 of 4; Brian K. Vaughan & Goran Sudzuka + José Marzan Jr.; *Vertigo)* When questions of loyalty arise from the all-female crew of The Whale, Yorick must decide whether his allegiances lie with his old companions or his new mate, who happens to be captain of the potentially mutinous ship. ... $2.99

Marvel

Amazing Fantasy 9 *(Identity Politics* 3 of 6; Fred Van Lente & Leonard Kirk) Betrayed by S.H.I.E.L.D. and stranded in the medieval streets of Prague, the all-new Scorpion learns that in the deadly world of international espionage she can't trust anyone $2.99

Exiles 65 *(Timebreakers* 4 of 4; Tony Bedard & Mizuki Sakakibara) Be here for the one time that Beak finally makes himself useful. $2.99

G.L.A. 3 (Dan Slott & Paul Pelletier) "Sure, we killed a Great Lakes Avenger in 1. And another in 2. But this time it's personal!" $2.99



close-up

Little Lulu: Sunday Afternoon

Dark Horse

Writer: John Stanley

Artist: Irving Tripp

Little Lulu is an Everygirl, whether she's weaving sprawling tales while babysitting the terrible tot Alvin, keeping her chubby chum Tubby and his clubhouse cronies in line, or making nice with the friendly ghost in her bedroom. This is a collection of the complete run of Stanley and Tripp's classic strip. 208pg b&w $9.95

ON SALE JUNE 8

new **House of M** #1 (Brian Michael Bendis & Olivier Coipel) The Avengers and the X-Men are faced with a common foe that becomes their greatest threat: Wanda Maximoff! The Scarlet Witch is out of control and the fate of the entire world is in her hands. $2.99

Incredible Hulk 82 (Peter David & Jae Lee) On his own in London, Bruce Banner watches in horror as a young woman is blown to bits right in front of him. But she is no ordinary woman: She is a sorceress with a strange connection to Banner, and the Hulk is the only one who can aid her rapidly fading spirit self in seeking vengeance on those who murdered her. $2.99

new **Last Hero Standing** 1 (of 5; Tom Defalco & Pat Olliffe) A weekly five-part event unites two generations. The great heroes of the marvel universe are vanishing without a trace! $2.99

Marvel Adventures Spider-Man 4 (Jeff Parker & Patrick Scherberger) The wall-crawler and hot-head collide in this adventure that finds the duo escaping one sticky situation, only to end up in hot water the very next page! $2.50

one-shot **Marvel Must Haves: Nyx #4 & 5** (Joe Quesada & Joshua Middleton + Rob Teranishi) Reprinting the sold-out Nyx #4-5, in time for next month's Nyx #6 – plus all-new, never-before-seen extras! 80pg $3.99

Marvel Team-Up 9 *(Master of the Ring* 3 of 5; Robert Kirkman & Scott Kolins) The Ringmaster's reality-altering ring is put to the test as Daredevil and Luke Cage join the epic battle. Will unbreakable skin and enhanced senses be enough to take down the newly superpowered Ringmaster? $2.99

new **Ororo: Before The Storm** 1 (Marc Sumerak & Carlos Barberi) Long before she became the X-Man known as Storm, a young orphan named Ororo Munroe stalked the streets of Cairo picking pockets and scraping to survive. $2.99

Runaways 5 *(True Believers* 5 of 6; Brian K. Vaughan & Adrian Alphona) As Chamber and the other teen former-heroes continue to scour Los Angeles in search of the Runaways, Victor Mancha finally learns which classic Marvel villain is his father. $2.99

Shanna, The She-Devil 5 (Frank Cho; *Marvel Knights)* Things just got a lot worse for our feisty heroine. It's a feeding frenzy in the jungle as thousands and thousands of razor-toothed raptors cut a bloody swathe through anything and everything in their path. $3.50

Spider-Girl 87 *(Family Business* 2 of 3; Tom Defalco & Ronald Frenz) Trapped within Fantastic Five headquarters, Spider-Girl joins the children of the original FF against a cosmically-powered Apox, the Omega Skrull, who will stop at nothing to destroy Reed, Ben, Johnny and Lyja. $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 78 (Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) In the aftermath of their nasty breakup, Peter and MJ must deal with the difficulties of still being in the same classes with friends who are only too helpful in attempting to heal their friends' wounds. $2.50

Uncanny X-Men 460 *(Mojo Rising* 1 of 2; Chris Claremont & Tom Raney) The Uncanny X-Men just can't get a break. As the team tries to relax and deal with the return of their once-dead teammate Psylocke, guess who crashes their party? ..... $2.50.

X-Men Unlimited 9 (Matt Fraction + Damon Hurd & Sam Kieth + Mark Brooks) An action-packed story about Wolverine's greatest deaths, and just how they've affected the nearly-invulnerable mutant over the years. $2.99

ON SALE FROM
JUNE 8

Dark Horse

Blade of the Immortal 102 *(Trickster* 4 of 4; Hiroaki Samura) Facing an enemy armed with kessen-satsu, the only poison known to damage his immortal blood, Manji is vulnerable, falling apart, and swinging in the dark! Will the vindictive Ito-ryü noose finally close in around Manji's neck? b&w $2.99

one-shot **Little Lulu: Sunday Afternoon** (John Stanley & Irving Tripp; tpb) *See Close-Up on facing page.*

Samurai Executioner Vol 6 (Kazuo Koike & Goseki Kojima; tpb) A mysterious woman, with a turtle-like demon tattooed on her back and the ability to swim like no other, is stealing weapons of men around Edo. Mature readers. 304pg b&w $9.95

Star Wars Tales 24 (various) Exploring the moral and emotional fall-out that comes with giving oneself over to the ways of the Sith, this issue features four stories steeped in darkness and danger, spanning nearly every Star Wars era. 64pg $5.99

DC Comics

Action Comics 828 (Gail Simone & John Byrne + Nelson) Revealing the truth about the terrifying new villain Repulse, who levels half the city in her search for Dr Polaris. And Superman is helpless before her power... ..... $2.50

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 192 *(Snow* 1 of 5; J. H. Williams III + Dan Curtis Johnson & Seth Fisher) Telling the origin of Mr Freeze from a new perspective! A family tragedy, coupled with the creation of an untested technological development, forges the obsession of a supervillain. $2.50

The Batman Strikes! 10 (Bill Matheny & Christopher Jones + Terry Beatty) The Penguin's got Batman on the ropes, and the Dark Knight's last hope is...Alfred? $2.25

Breach 6 (Bob Harras & Marcos Martin + Alvaro Lopez) While Breach rages against his inability to stop a new threat, evil is afoot. Plus, Tim comes face-to-face with Mac; more on the mysterious Tobias Underwood; and Mac's wife is revealed! $2.50

new **Bugs Bunny** Vol 1 *(What's Up, Doc?;* various; tpb) Improbable gags, lighthearted fights and oddly convincing disguises. 112pg $6.99

new **Daffy Duck** Vol 1 *(You're Despicable!;* various; tpb) Everyone's favourite foul-tempered fowl explodes into his own collection with this first volume of Daffy Duck stories straight from the pages of Looney Tunes. 112pg $6.99

Fables 38 *(Return to the Homelands* 1 of 5; Bill Willingham & Mark Buckingham + Steve Leialoha; *Vertigo)* After fighting his way from one world to another, Boy Blue reaches the Imperial City, the capital of the Adversary's vast empire, and confronts The Adversary. $2.50

Gotham Central 32 (Greg Rucka + Ed Brubaker & Kano + Stefano Gaudiano) Ed Brubaker and Greg Rucka reunite to tell a tale so big it brings all the detectives of Central together. A body turns up in Gotham belonging to...Robin? ... $2.50

Green Arrow 51 (James Peaty & Eric Battle + Jack Purcell) A bomb kills dozens and spreads terror throughout Green Arrow's hometown. Can Ollie take the mad bomber down before he strikes again? $2.50

Hawkman 41 (Justin Gray + Jimmy Palmiotti & Joe Bennett + Ruy Jose) Hawkman and Hawkgirl are no more, and as more villains from Hawkman's past crawl out of the woodwork to terrorise St Roch, the city gets what it needs – a new Hawkman! $2.50

JLA 115 (Geoff Johns + Allan Heinberg & Chris Batista + Mark Farmer) Before they can discuss the actions and repercussions of the League within the League, the JLA first must battle some old foes. The Secret Society of Super Villains has returned – and somehow they have more information on the heroes' lives than ever before. ... $2.25

Justice League Elite 12 (Joe Kelly & Doug Mahnke + Tom Nguyen) Vera Black's sanity – and her life – are on the line as she battles her brother, Manchester Black! And if she loses, the Elite, the JLA, and all of London will suffer the horrible consequences. $2.50

Mad XL 34 (The Usual Gang of Idiots) Containing the Best of the Web, MAD Marginals XL, a featured Writer of the Month, more Readers' Choice picks, and other fun features. 96pg b&w $4.99

Majestic 6 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Neil Googe + Trevor Scott; *WildStorm)* Majestic, alone on a world full of his darkest enemies, squares off with one of the few beings in the galaxy who can match him in power and combat skills! $2.99

Monster Collection Vol 2 (Itoh Sei) Kasche's hunt for the stolen Guardian of Knowledge has led her to the once-peaceful city of Wallace, where rebellion is brewing under its Lord. 176pg b&w $9.99

Nightwing 109 (Devin Grayson & Phil Hester + Ande Parks) Dick Grayson is living a lie. His mission to break into the heart of Gotham's underworld is about to lead him straight into the heart of evil: the Black Mask. $2.25

The Rann/Thanagar War 2 (Dave Gibbons & Ivan Reis + Marc Campos) Green Lanterns Kyle Rayner and Kilowog join the fight with L.E.G.I.O.N. against the Khund hordes! $2.50

Rogue Trooper Vol 2 *(Fort Neuro;* Gerry Finley-Day & Brett Ewins + Cam Kennedy + Colin Wilson) Rogue Trooper's quest to hunt down and kill the traitor responsible for the deaths of his comrades continues. Rogue finds himself at Fort Neuropa, whose inhabitants are starting to become very strange indeed. 192pg b&w $17.99

one-shot **Superman: Godfall** (Michael Turner + Joe Kelly & Talent Caldwell + Jason Gorder; tpb) Collecting the 6-part tale originally presented in Action Comics #812-813, Adventures of Superman #625-626 and Superman #202-203. The Man of Steel finds himself on Krypton – but can he escape and return to Earth? 128pg $9.99

Tom Strong 33 (Joe Casey & Ben Oliver; *America's Best Comics)* When Pneuman begins a pattern of strange behaviour, Tom Strong and Solomon undertake one of their most amazing adventures – a *Fantastic Journey* that takes them from the spires of Millennium City to the cold heart of a robot! . $2.99

Marvel

District X #14 *(One of Us* 2 of 2; David Hine & Lan Medina; *Marvel Knights)* The tense stand-off continues in Mutant Town as an unstable teenage mutant threatens a girl's life. $2.99

new **Gravity** 1 (Sean McKeever & Mike Norton) Meet freshman Greg Willis, NYC newbie from the rural Midwest hoping to realise his dream of becoming a big-city superhero. But will the realities of city life, college and saving the day prove to be too much for him? $2.99

Last Hero Standing 2 (of 5, Tom Defalco & Pat Olliffe) A weekly five-part event unites two generations. What has happened to Spider-Man, the thing, the scarlet witch, Captain America, and the rest of the MU's heavy hitters? $2.99

Livewires 5 (Adam Warren & Rick Mays) All mechanised hell breaks loose as the Livewires' ill-fated raid on an airborne covert project goes spectacularly awry .. . $2.99

Marvel Knights 4 #19 *(Inhumane* 1 of 2; Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa & Valentine De Landro; *Marvel Knights)* The Inhumans live by their own rites and rituals, their own laws and governances. But when two Inhuman children seek asylum with the Fantastic Four, battle lines are drawn and an inter-species war threatens to erupt! $2.99

Marvel Knights Spider-Man 15 *(Wild Blue Yonder* 3 of 5; Reginald Hudlin & Billy Tan) Crusher Creel has developed a nasty habit and he'll do anything to feed it! Looks like a job for – Spider-Man. That is, unless a certain new hero on the scene doesn't get there first. $2.99

Marvel Nemesis: The Imperfects 2 *(Rise of the Imperfects;* Greg Pak & Renato Arlem) After forcing cybernetically enhanced Marvel heroes to fight to the death in a secret arena, Van Roekel recruits new warriors from unlikely places. $2.99

Mary Jane: Homecoming 4 *(The Homecoming Thing;* Sean McKeever & Takeshi Miyazawa) The King and Queen have been crowned. The crowd is overjoyed. But not everybody's happy. Who could possibly ruin this night for Mary Jane Watson and her circle of friends? $2.99

New Thunderbolts 9 (Fabian Nicieza & Tom Grummett) Everyone in Atlantis is dying and only one man can save them – the person responsible for their poisoning! $2.99

new **New Warriors** 1 (Zeb Wells & Skottie Young) When Night Thrasher strikes a mysterious deal with a Reality-TV producer, the team moves out of New York to help the villain-plagued denizens of small-town America. $2.99

Powers 12 (Brian Michael Bendis & Michael Avon Oeming) Homicide Detectives Christian Walker and Deena Pilgrim investigate murders specific to superhero cases, and with all superheroes declared illegal, the city is in chaos. 48pg .... $3.95.

Punisher 22 *(Up Is Down And Black Is White* 4 of 6; Garth Ennis & Leandro Fernandez) The plot thickens when übergangster Nicky Cavella enlists the services of none other than the shadowy rogue op and force of nature known as Rawlins. $2.99

Toxin 3 *(The Answer, My Friend;* Peter Milligan & Darick Robertson) They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, and when the apple is a young, whacked-out alien symbiote named Toxin, and the tree is Carnage, then it's time to duck and cover! $2.99

Ultimate Secret 3 (Warren Ellis & Steve McNiven) All technological civilizations within 150 light years of Earth have been destroyed! Nick Fury knows the answer to the threat is aboard the alien Kree vessel orbiting above $2.99

X-Men 171 *(Bizarre Love Triangle* 1 of 4; Peter Milligan & Salvador Larroca) A new student has arrived at the Xavier Institute. Will Gambit be seduced by this little Lolita, or will Rogue do the unthinkable to keep her man?! $2.50

X-Men: The End – Heroes and Martyrs 4 (Chris Claremont & Sean Chen) Things fall apart and the centre cannot hold – as the jaw-dropping true secret of Sinister is revealed! ... $2.99

Illuminations

Highlights from June's releases

Selected by Martin "Biff" Averre

Hellboy and Mike Mignola are back, albeit for only a two-issue mini-series at Dark Horse, **Hellboy The Island**. The comics have always been great and the movie was surprisingly well produced. The reactions from the Mignola fans and just plain old movie goers was very positive and sales of all things Hellboy and Mignola proved this. Another tale of Gods and monsters and another sure fire hit. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

However, the coolest thing this month from Dark Horse is not a comic or a trade, but the Mini Fender Guitar Collection. These beautiful replicas will retail for about £17.50 and are a must have for retailer and guitar fans alike. **Sales 4/5 Quality 5/5**

DC Countdown has arrived and is literally flying off of the shelves and at 80p for 80 pages this is not surprising. I have already had to reorder another 50 copies and some of the second printings too. I mention this because once this oneshot has been read it becomes obvious something really special is going to happen this summer and that the miniseries like **Day Of Vengeance**, **Villains United**, **The OMAC Project** and more are going to be pivotal and essential reading. Rush down to your local supplier and reserve copies of these series as they are bound to have been underordered. I know I have ordered too few and have since winged in reorders.

This leads me to mention **DC Special The Return of Donna Troy**, a four issue mini-series. Not previously a fan of the character or mini-series I am now highly recommending you pick up this series as Troia Goddess Of the Moon as she is now known, is haunted by feelings of another life and a cosmic mystery to be solved. Crisis anyone? **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

Captain Hurricane, the Spider, Robot Archie and the Steel Claw are just a few of the wonderful characters that were found in UK comics in the 1960s and '70s, who are sorely missed by many a comic fan. The great news is that Alan Moore is bringing back several of these characters in a six-issue mini from WildStorm, **Albion**. Alan Moore has the incredible ability to imbue extra life and feeling into timeworn characters and for him to be let loose on these old favourites is a dream come true, well for me at least. This is a title that the retailer must recommend to customers as it is not immediately obvious what the comic is about. Once the reader is in he/she will never want to leave.. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

While DC is, I surmise, going to unravel **Crisis** and bring back the various Earths, Marvel has its own big event for the summer, **House of M**. This is an eight-issue mini written by Brian Michael Bendis with art by Olivier Coipel, so you know it's going to be good before we even get to the plot. As most Marvel fans know, Wanda Maximoff, the Scarlet Witch, killed several Avengers, became braindead and Magneto claimed her body. Well, she wasn't dead and now she's back. Stopping her will take the combined might of The New Avengers and The Astonishing X-Men. It is very common to see the phrase *nothing will be the same again*, but this time you better believe it. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

With 23 years of comic retail experience as Ace Comics, Biff has also produced his **Illuminations** monthly fanzine for 19 years before moving it to the web.

ON SALE FROM
JUNE 15

Dark Horse

Billy the Kid's Old-Timey Oddities 3 (Eric Powell & Kyle Hotz) After being attacked by Dr Frankenstein's monsters, Billy and his companions are taken prisoner and locked in the doctor's dungeon. $2.99

Conan and the Jewels of Gwahlur 3 (P. Craig Russsell & Lovern Kindzierski) Conan must unravel the treacheries of a false goddess and an impostor oracle in a haunted temple where for once it's not Conan doing the decapitations. $2.99

Man with the Screaming Brain 2 (various) This tale starts with our square-jawed antihero is found face-down in a ghetto alley, a bullet blown through his head, and ends with a reanimated monster that only this king of B-Movies could bring to life. $2.99

one-shot **Too Much Coffee Man: How To Be Happy** (Shannon Wheeler; tpb) *See Close-Up, below.*

DC Comics

Adventures of Superman 641 (Greg Rucka & Karl Kerschl) With Ruin's identity revealed, Clark Kent must come to grips with the fact that someone close to him has betrayed him. $2.50

Batman Archives Vol 6 (various; hb) Collects Detective Comics #120-135 (1947-48)! The Dark Knight and Robin face off against the Penguin, Catwoman, the Joker and more. 224pg $49.99

Batman: Dark Detective 4 (Steve Englehart & Marshall Rogers + Terry Austin) Batman and Silver St. Cloud had their hands full dealing with the Joker's bid for mayor...and things will only get worse when they face the Scarecrow. $2.99

Batman: Gotham Knights 66 (A.J. Lieberman & Rick Burchett + Alvaro Lopez) The newly revitalised Kobra has come to Gotham – and they're after Prometheus! But what could Hush's bodyguard possibly have that Kobra would want, and just who is Kobra working for? $2.50

Birds of Prey 83 (Gail Simone & Joe Bennett + Jack Jadson) A story tying into The OMAC Project 3. Oracle's out of control, and an eye in the sky is targeting her '– just when Canary and Wildcat, facing a set of legendary assassins, need her most! $2.50

Day of Vengeance 3 (of 6; Bill Willingham & Justiniano + Walden Wong) The Shadowpact – made up of Ragman, Blue Devil, The Enchantress, Nightmaster, and yes, Detective Chimp – attempt to hunt down the Spectre! $2.50

Ex Machina 12 *(Fact vs Fiction* 1; Brian K. Vaughan & Tony Harris + Tom Feister; *WildStorm)* When Mayor Mitchell Hundred is summoned for jury duty, the retired hero has no idea what horrors await him. $2.99

Green Lantern 2 (Geoff Johns & Carlos Pacheco + Jesus Merino) While struggling to realign his life on Earth, Hal Jordan makes a horrifying discovery in the farthest reaches of space – one that holds the key to the future of the Green Lantern Corps. $2.99

JLA Classified 8 *(I Can't Believe It's Not the Justice League;* Keith Giffen + J.M. DeMatteis & Kevin Maguire + Joe Rubinstein) Blue Beetle has amnesia, and a giant-sized G'Nort is rampaging through the city! But before the Buddies can help, they'll have to get past the Power Posse! $2.99

The Human Race 4 (Ben Raab & Justiniano + Walden Wong) The extraterrestrial parasite within Ulysses Adams is grooming him to be the progenitor of a new human race...and only the scientist Paracelsus and his minions are happy about that! ... $2.99

one-shot **JSA: Black Reign** (Geoff Johns & various; tpb) Reprinting JSA #56-58 and Hawkman #23-25. Black Adam brings old world justice to Kahndaq as Hawkman seizes control of the JSA and brings them to the turbulent Middle East for an epic battle. 144pg ... $12.99

Lucifer 63 *(Morningstar* 1 of 6; Mike Carey & Peter Gross + Ryan Kelly; *Vertigo)* As Lucifer and Elaine re-enter the world, they must confront the offspring of the living tarot deck known as the Basanos, newly spawned from Jill Presto. $2.50

Manhunter 11 (Marc Andreyko & Javier Pina + Jimmy Palmiotti) Guest-starring two legendary ex-Manhunters as they come face-to-face with the Manhunter stalker! It's up to current titleholder Kate Spencer to stop the killer – and you'll never guess who it is. $2.50

Mnemovore 3 (Hans Rodionoff + Ray Fawkes & Mike Huddleston; *Vertigo)* Kaley's world is falling apart. The enemy has been revealed. Now she must accept that the entity is real, not just a paranoid construction of her damaged mind. But Kaley's not the only one who's started seeing things. $2.99

Sandman Mystery Theatre Vol 3 (The Vamp; Matt Wagner + Steven T. Seagle & Guy Davis; *Vertigo;* tpb) Collects the fourth story arc (issues #13-16) from the re-imagination of the original Golden Age Sandman, The Vamp continues the story of Wesley Dodds and his soon-to-be paramour (and narrator) Dian Belmont as they become entangled in mystery from two different directions. 104pg $12.99

Scooby-Doo 97 (John Rozum + Ivan Velez & various) Jinkies! Just what the heck are they anyway? Scooby and the gang are about to find out! $2.25

Seven Soldiers: Klarion The Witch Boy 2 (Grant Morrison & Frazier Irving) Bimonthly. Pursued by the Horigal, Klarion reaches the Foundation Stone – the great underground market as seen in The Guardian – only to find the Sheeda and the evil Queen Morgayne waiting for him in the dark, dank tunnels. ... $2.99

Sword of the Dark Ones Vol 2 (Yasui Kentaro & Kotobuki Tsukasa) Harman Cartel, leader of Assassins Guild Crimson Despair, faces off against mysterious former mercenary Leroy Schwartz in a battle for the ages! 196pg b&w $9.99

Teen Titans 25 *(The Insiders* 3 of 4; Geoff Johns & Matthew Clark + Art Thibert) Recovering from their first confrontation with Lex Luthor, the Titans and the Outsiders come under fire by another secret weapon – a squad of Superman robots! $2.50

Trigger 7 (Jason Hall & John Watkiss; *Vertigo)* Meet Leonard – an average guy living a life that leaves a lot to be desired. But when Leonard is pulled into his alternate life as a Trigger, it gives him a fleeting glimpse of a life that he can only dream of – literally. $2.99

one-shot **Wildsiderz** #0 (J. Scott Campbell + Andy Hartnell & Campbell; *WildStorm)* A new breed of heroes is born when five teenaged friends create holographic forcefields which allow them to duplicate the powers of the animal kingdom. $1.99

new **Year One: Batman/Ra's Al Ghul** 1 (of 2; Devin Grayson & Paul Gulacy + Jimmy Palmiotti) Prestige. When Gotham City's hospitals, homes and streets begin filling with the undead, the Dark Knight is the only one with a chance to discover the secret behind their continued animation. 48pg $5.99

Marvel

Cable/Deadpool 16 *(Enema of the State* 2 of 4; Fabian Nicieza & Patrick Zircher) Deadpool's search for Cable forces a fight with the new Horseman of the Apocalype – the Agent of War named Cable. $2.99

Daredevil 74 *(Decalogue* 4 o 5; Brian Michael Bendis & Alex Maleev; *Marvel Knights)* The secrets of Matt Murdock's clandestine marriage to Milla are revealed at last! The details of Daredevil's year as Kingpin continues in this special love story. $2.99

Daredevil: Redemption 6 (David Hine & Michael Gaydos; *Marvel Knights)* Twelve years have passed since Joel Flood stood trial for a murder that devastated an entire community. Now Matt Murdock must face the consequences of his role as Flood's defense attorney. $2.99

one-shot **Fantastic Four: The Movie** 1 (Mike Carey & Dan Jurgens) Featuring the all-new 52-page adaptation of the film – telling the origin of Marvel's greatest super team and their first encounter with Doctor Doom! 64pg $4.99

Gambit 12 *(Hath No Fury* 2 of 2; John Layman & Georges Jeanty) Every criminal and cutthroat in New Orleans is gunning for Gambit. Ol' Remy LeBeau's got a price on his head, courtesy of the new head of the Thieves and Assassins Guilds, his ex-wife. $2.99

Hercules 3 (Frank Tieri & Mark Texeira; *Marvel Knights)* Having picked up the gauntlet thrown down by King Eurytheses, Hercules now embarks on his greatest challenge – reenacting his Twelve Labours for a reality-TV audience. $2.99

Last Hero Standing 3 (of 5; Tom Defalco & Pat Olliffe) A weekly five-part event unites two generations. Spider-Girl, the fantastic five and a-next must join forces with today's superstars to uncover the answer – and the trail leads to a major Avengers villain! $2.99

new **Marvel Adventures Fantastic Four** 1 (Akira Yoshida & Carlo Pagulayan) When the world-renowned heroes happen upon some children in distress, they naturally rush to the rescue! $2.50

Power Pack 4 *(End of the Rainbow;* Marc Sumerak & Gurihiru) Julie Power is about to make a decision that could mean the end of Power Pack! But when a familiar foe returns seeking revenge, the end of the team may be a lot closer than she ever imagined! $2.99

Rogue 12 (Tony Bedard & Karl Moline) Years ago, Rogue met the X-Men as an enemy. Now, thanks to the Memory Thief, she battles her teammates again – and you won't believe the outcome! $2.99

Spider-Man: Breakout 3 (Tony Bedard & Manuel Garcia) Why would the world's most dangerous escaped supercriminals risk their freedom to destroy New York's version of Mother Teresa? $2.99

Stormbreaker: The Saga of Beta Ray Bill 6 (Michael Oeming & Dan Berman + Andrea Di Vito) What more can Beta Ray Bill suffer? He's seen the end of two worlds, both of which he called home. Is Bill the last of the Korbinites? What new twist of fate will he have to endure? $2.99

Ultimate Fantastic Four 20 *(Think Tank* 2 of 2; Mike Carey & Jae Lee) The fledgling FF find themselves helpless in a Baxter Building gone mad! Has young Reed Richards, the world's smartest man, finally met his match? $2.50

Uncanny X-Men 461 *(Mojo Rising* 2 of 2; Chris Claremont & Tom Raney) The Uncanny X-Men just can't get a break. As the team tries to relax and deal with the return of their once-dead teammate Psylocke, guess who crashes their party? ..... $2.50.

Wolverine 29 *(Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* 4 of 6; Mark Millar & John Romita Jr.; *Marvel Knights)* It's time to track the sickness to its source – even if it means taking on The Hand down to every last foot soldier. $2.50

ON SALE FROM
JUNE 22

Dark Horse

Conan 17 (Kurt Busiek & Cary Nord + Thomas Yeates + Dave Stewart) Bruised, angry, and fed up with both men and mysticism, Conan's ready to start handing out a few lessons in ass-kicking – and he finds plenty of contenders willing to take him on. $2.99

new **Hellboy: The Island** 1 (Mike Mignola) After more than two years at the bottom of the sea, Hellboy washes up on an island full of sunken ships where he is tempted by singing dead men and stupidly ignores good advice from an ancient enemy. $2.99

Star Wars: General Grievous 4 (Chuck Dixon & Rick Leonardi + Mark Pennington + Lucas Marangon) Flynn Kybo and his fellow Jedi invade Grievous's stronghold on an occupied Ugnaut world while the general deals with the mass escape of his Padawan hostages. $2.99

What's Michael? Vol 10 *(Sleepless Nights;* Makoto Kobayashi; tpb) Combining true-to-life feline behaviour every cat-lover will recognise, along with off-the-wall trips into the realms of the fantastic. 88pg b&w $8.95

DC Comics

one-shot **Appleseed Movie Book** Vol 1 (various) At the end of the Third World War, a utopian city is founded from the ashes of conflict. A young female super soldier is recruited from the remains of the battered battlefield to serve as the city's guardian. What she discovers is not the promised land of peace, but rather a city on the brink of committing mass genocide upon its unsuspecting citizens! 160pg $12.99

new **Astro City: The Dark Age** 1 (Kurt Busiek & Brent Anderson; *WildStorm)* In the wake of a global catastrophe during the early 1970s, two brothers deal with family secrets and social upheaval, involving heroes from Jack-In-the-Box to the Blue Knight, newcomers like Apollo Eleven, and the unsettling events leading to the final fate of the Silver Agent. $2.99

The Authority: Revolution 9 (Ed Brubaker & Dustin Nguyen + Richard Friend; *WildStorm)* As the Authority

close-up

Too Much Coffee Man: How To Be Happy

Dark Horse

Writer/Artist: Shannon Wheeler

The hyper-maniacal, coffee-cup-headed antihero laments the state of American democracy, global warming, living under the confusing cloud of terrorist threats, sexual politics, debilitating personal neuroses, and all sorts of other really fun and lighthearted topics! Hilarious art, absurd-but-insightful observations and bold humour. 144pg b&w $12.95

ON SALE JUNE 15

comes together at Jenny's urging, learn what the mysterious one-time Weatherman Henry Bendix has been doing in their absence. $2.99

one-shot **The Authority/ Lobo Spring Break Massacre** (Keith Giffen + Alan Grant & Simon Bisley; *WildStorm)* In 2003's The Authority/Lobo: Jingle Hell, Jenny Quantum, after finding a copy of the Lobo Paramilitary Christmas Special, brought Lobo to the WildStorm Universe to punish him for killing Santa. The only problem? After bringing Lobo into the WildStorm fold, she forgot to put him back – and he's been rampaging there for well over a year! 48pg $4.99

Batman 641 (Judd Winick & Doug Mahnke + Tom Nguyen) The Red Hood has Onyx on her heels, but Batman's still in Metropolis! Can the Dark Knight get back to Gotham in time to save the urban heroine from the city's latest costumed psycho killer? $2.25

Batman: Jekyll and Hyde 3 (Paul Jenkins & Jae Lee) Two-Face has drugged Batman, and now the Dark Knight must battle against his own Jekyll and Hyde syndrome. But what impact will Two-Face's struggles with his own identity have on Batman and his own scarred psyche? $2.99

The Books of Magick: Life During Wartime 12 (Si Spencer + Neil Gaiman & Steve Yeowell + Dean Ormston; *Vertigo)* In the aftermath of battle, Tim must finally confront the Faerie Queene and face the consequences of all his actions. And her majesty wants nothing less than his head. $2.50

Catwoman 44 (Will Pfeifer & Pete Woods) While trying to determine why the East End has remained unaffected by Black Mask following *War Games*, Catwoman finds herself presented with a tempting offer from none other than Hush! $2.50

one-shot **The Complete Indigo Prime** (John Smith & various; tpb) *See Close-Up, above.*

Doom Patrol 13 (John Byrne & Byrne + Doug Hazlewood) Cliff and Rita experiment with the Chief's new time-travel technology and are transported to two seminal days in Doom Patrol history. Will their appearance in the past change history for better or worse? $2.50

The Incal Vol 2 *(The Epic Journey;* Alexandro Jodorowsky & Mlbius) John Difool, a low-class detective in a degenerate world, found his life turned upside down when he discovered an ancient artifact called The Incal. Now he travels across the cosmos with his pet concrete bird Deepo and the universe's greatest warrior, the Metabaron, racing against time to keep The Great Darkness from unleashing destruction upon infinite galaxies. 160pg $19.99

John Constantine – Hellblazer Special: Papa Midnite 5 (Mat Johnson & Tony Akins + Dan Green; *Vertigo)* Midnite pushes Manhattan's rebelling slaves to the limits of destruction, though Fortune is determined to end the suffering. $2.99

Legion of Super-Heroes 7 (Mark Waid & Barry Kitson + Art Thibert) As divisions begin to take root over who's really in charge, the team learns another chilling secret about the United Planets – a secret that may remove a key Legionnaire from the playing field. 40pg $2.99

one-shot **Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere** 1 (of 9; Mike Carey & Glenn Fabry; *Vertigo)* Hidden far beneath the modern city is London Below, a strange alternate world of swirling colors, casual magic and gothic danger, populated by misfit characters who have, quite literally, fallen through the cracks of the workaday world above. The tale begins as Richard Mayhew, a very decent but very ordinary man, stumbles across Door, an extraordinary young lady from a London that Richard never dreamed could exist. His single act of kindness toward her immediately costs him his fiancé, brings a pair of unthinkably ruthless assassins to his flat, and sends him on a quest that could quickly end with his own untimely demise. $2.99

Otherworld 4 (Phil Jimenez & Jimenez + Andy Lanning; *Vertigo)* Siobhan embraces her magical blessings and agrees to be a disciple of Cessaire. But can Cessaire be trusted with a magician as powerful as her naïve student? $2.99

Powerpuff Girls 63 (various) Buttercup finds out some video games are just a bit too real! And meet Townsville's new number one citizen...Sedusa? $2.25

Robin 139 (Bill Willingham & Scott McDaniel + Andy Owens) Yet another assassin has come to Blüdhaven answering the call of the Penguin. His name is The Catcher, and he's got orders to take out the Boy Wonder with his army of canine killers! $2.25

new **Seimaden** Vol 1 (Higuri You) How far will one man go for love? Find out in Seimaden, the tale of Lawless, who agreed to become a demon in order to free his one true love Alice from a demon king! 180pg b&w $9.99

Teen Titans Go! 20 (J. Torres & Todd Nauck + Lary Stucker) Atlas accidentally pulls Starfire and Raven into his virtual world! While Robin and Cyborg work on getting the girls back, Beast Boy discovers he can control Raven with his game controller. $2.25

Year One: Batman/Scarecrow 2 (of 2; Bruce Jones & Sean Murphy) Prestige. While Batman and Robin race to learn the identity of Gotham's newest villain, the Scarecrow continues his murderous revenge spree. 48pg $5.99

close-up

The Complete Indigo Prime

DC Comics/2000AD

Writer: John Smith

Artists: Mick Austin + Pauline Doyle + Mike Hadley + Chris Weston

This elite trouble-shooting organisation cleans up the mess left by time travellers, meddlers and monsters – for a price! Join Prime Agents Winwood and Cord, Almaranda, Fegredo and Brecht and more in this amazing collection of hallucinatory adventures! 192pg $19.99

ON SALE JUNE 22

Marvel

Araña 6 (of 6; Fiona Avery & Roger Cruz) It's high noon in Brooklyn as Araña and her new nemesis face off to settle a very personal score. $2.99

Black Panther 5 *(Who Is The Black Panther?* 5 of 6; Reginald Hudlin & John Romita Jr.; *Marvel Knights)* While the Black Panther furiously battles the Black Knight, five miles above Wakanda, Klaw and his team lay siege to the Royal Palace in search of the ultimate prize: The Queen Mother herself! $2.99

Captain America 8 *(The Winter Soldier* 1 of 6; Ed Brubaker & Steve Epting) The questions plaguing Captain America's dreams and memories have been answered in the most brutal way possible. And in the wake of this brutality, General Lukin makes his first all-out assault! ..... $2.99.

new **Dream Police** 1 (J. Michael Straczynski & Mike Deodato) Featuring Sister Mary, whose convent becomes a playground for a sinister force, Two-Pack Benny, who's trying to keep his hand in the dream-molding game, and little Albert, who unleashes the monster under his bed on his little suburban neighbourhood. 48pg .. $3.99

Fantastic Four 528 *(Random Factors;* J. Michael Straczynski & Mike McKone) As Ben revels in his newfound wealth and status, an act of sabotage may well jeopardise Reed's secret project – and a visit from state officials has dire ramifications for Sue and the rest of the Richards clan. $2.99

Fantastic Four: Foes 6 (of 6; Robert Kirkman & Cliff Rathburn) The Vault is completed, and it's worst-case scenario time. The Fantastic Four have spent the last few months gathering their greatest foes into one place – a safe place – but now something has gone wrong and they're faced with the combined might of all their foes. $2.99

House of M #2 (Brian Michael Bendis & Olivier Coipel) The world turns upside-down. This series features every X-Man and Avenger you can think of! ... $2.99

Kabuki 5 *(The Alchemy* 5; David Mack) Kabuki sets up shop in a new country with a new identity and a new job to begin her new calling in life. But can she ever really escape the shadow of her past and the Noh Agency? $2.99

Last Hero Standing 4 (of 5; Tom Defalco & Pat Olliffe) A weekly five-part event unites two generations. Does the presence of the Watcher signify the end of this age of heroes? $2.99

Machine Teen 2 (of 5; *History 101001;* Marc Sumerak & Mike Hawthorne) As Adam's perfect world begins to crumble around him, he uncovers a shocking clue about his origin that will send his life spiralling out of control. $2.99

New Avengers 8 (Brian Michael Bendis & Steve McNiven + Sal Buscema) The Avengers try to help the most powerful super hero in the world figure out who he is and where he came from! But will this knowledge destroy the man they are trying to help? $2.50

New X-Men 15 *(Year's End* 2 of 2; Christina Weir + Nunzio Defilippis & Paco Medina) The Blob has set his sights on Xavier's, and it's up to the New Mutants and the Hellions to stop their bickering and fight as one! $2.99

Nightcrawler 7 *(The Winding Way* 1 of 4; Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa & Darick Robertson) As a badly injured Kurt lies on the brink of death, moments of his life flash before his eyes. Unfortunately, these memories are not how he remembered. $2.99

Spellbinders 4 (Mike Carey & Mike Perkins) When the witches came to Salem, they brought something with them: the Pillar of Smoke. This arcane construct could prove to be a blessing or a curse. $2.99

one-shot **Spider-Man: House of M** 1 (Mark Waid & Tom Peyer + Salvador Larroca) Peter Parker has it all – respect, fame, and the adoration of all. But he also has a deep, destructive secret that he keeps from the world and from his family – one that could well unravel the reality he knows! $2.99

Supreme Power 17 *(The Deconstruction of Mark Milton;* J. Michael Straczynski & Gary Frank; *Max Comics)* There's love in the air for Doctor Spectrum and a certain amphibious creature...and a storm on the horizon for Hyperion. $2.99

Ultimate X-Men 60 (Brian K. Vaughan & Stuart Immonen) Wolverine and Storm are about to take on an all-new threat to the Ultimate Universe... Lady Deathstrike! $2.50

Wolverine: Soultaker 5 (Akira Yoshida & Shin Nagasawa) The climactic final battle pitting Wolverine and the Priestess Mana against her evil-twin Hana and the Demon Lord Ryuki. $2.99

X-Men 172 *(Bizarre Love Triangle* 2 of 4; Peter Milligan & Salvador Larroca) A new student has arrived at the Xavier Institute. She's sexy, sassy, and has the hots for Gambit! $2.50

ON SALE FROM

JUNE 29

Dark Horse

Aliens vs Predator Vol 2: Civilized Beasts (Mike Kennedy & Roger Robinson; tpb) Marooned on a planet infested with the deadliest Alien species ever encountered, the colonists learn first-hand the Law of the Jungle: adapt or become extinct. 96pg $6.95

one-shot **The Jackson 500** Vol 1 (Tim Biskup; hb) Tim Biskup continues where he left off with his 100 Paintings book. Birds, beasts, shriners, and showgirls are among the frolicking inhabitants of Biskup's bizarre, colourful world. 112pg $14.95

new **Scarlet Traces: The Great Game** 1 (Ian Edginton & D'Israeli) After almost four decades of conflict, the British invasion of Mars has ground to a bloody stalemate in the dust of the red planet. $2.99

Star Wars: Clone Wars Vol 6 *(On the Fields of Battle;* John Ostrander & Jan Duursema + Dan Parsons; tpb) Mace Windu leads an elite Jedi strikeforce against an army of trained killers in a demonstration of Jedi power and resolve. 168pg $19.95

Star Wars: Republic 78 *(Into the Unknown* 1 of 2; Welles Hartley & Doug Wheatley + Christopher Chuckry) In the aftermath of the events in Episode III, Jedi on opposite ends of the galaxy try to come to terms with how their world has changed. $2.99

Super Manga Blast! 53 (various) Makoto Kobayashi delivers two tales of domestic frustration and feline cohabitation in the world of *What's Michael?* while Kobayashi's romantic comedy, *Club 9*, nears its end. 128pg b&w $5.99

Usagi Yojimbo 85 *(The Treasure of the Mother of Mountains* 3; Stan Sakai) Tomoe Ame, bodyguard to the Geishu lord, fights for her life in her own province – and with ronin Usagi at her side! 24pg b&w $2.99

DC Comics

new **Albion** 1 (Alan Moore + Leah Moore & various; *WildStorm)* Britain never had any superheroes. It had something much stranger: a collection of paragons, monsters, and clowns that vanished a quarter century ago, never to be seen again. Who were Robot Archie and the Steel Claw? Who was Captain Hurricane, or the Spider? And where have they been for 25 years? ... $2.99

Batman Allies Secret Files 2005 (various) Batman must face Gotham City's danger alone for the first time in years, face the GCPD, and deal with Spoiler's death. 48pg $4.99

one-shot **Batman / Superman / Wonder Woman: Trinity** (Matt Wagner; tpb) Will the combined might of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman be enough to save the world from the mad schemes of Ra's al Ghul? 208pg $17.99

Cartoon Network Block Party 10 (various) Johnny Bravo finds himself living a dream as gorgeous women compete on a TV show for his attention. $2.25

Catwoman: When in Rome 6 (of 6; Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale) Selina's heading back to Gotham City, but not before she deals with the betrayals and truths she's uncovered. $3.50

City of Tomorrow 3 (Howard Chaykin; *WildStorm)* Things have gone downhill fast in the nanotech paradise Columbia. And when Tucker takes a stand against mechanical mobsters Frankie Machina and Adam Zero, things start to heat up. $2.99

new **DC Special: The Return of Donna Troy** 1 (of 4; Phil Jimenez & José Luís García-López + George Pérez) Torn from Earth by the events of Titans/Young Justice: Graduation Day, Donna Troy has re-emerged among the Titans of Myth as Troia, Goddess of the Moon. But memories of a different life haunt her as she leads the Titans of Myth in the final battle of a long campaign of interplanetary conquest, gathering weapons, warriors, and worshippers to fulfill a mission she has begun to doubt. $2.99

The Devil Does Exist Vol 2 (Takanashi Mitsuba) Saito Kayano's mother and Edogawa Takeru's father dive into their blissful marriage, as mother and daughter move into the Edogawa household. 192pg b&w $9.99

Elfquest: The Grand Quest Vol 9 (Wendy Pini + Richard Pini & Wendy Pini + Joe Staton; tpb) The Siege at Blue Mountain storyline comes to a close as Rayek meets up with the evil Winnowill and a new, dangerous alliance is formed! 208pg b&w $9.99

The Flash 223 *(Rogue War* 4 of 6; Geoff Johns & Howard Porter + Livesay) Zoom is back and he aims to upset the balance of the war and teach Wally West a new lesson in the differences between hero and villain! $2.25

Hellblazer 209 *(Down in the Ground Where the Dead Men Go* 3 of 6; Mike Carey & Leonardo Manco; *Vertigo)* In the depths of Hell, Constantine undergoes an unholy communion and learns a whole lot more about both allies and enemies than he ever wanted to know. $2.75

JLA Classified 9 *(I Can't Believe It's Not the Justice League;* Keith Giffen + J.M. DeMatteis & Kevin Maguire + Joe Rubinstein) Caught between a Godzilla-sized G'Nort and their evil doppelgangers in the Power Posse, it's up to Guy Gardner and Booster Gold to save the day and return everyone to their strip mall headquarters. $2.99

The Losers 25 (Andy Diggle & Jock; *Vertigo)* The very ship the Losers came out to help is sinking. Its crew is drowning. Max's reinforcements have arrived. Their ally-turned-adversary, Roque, has gotten his hands on 300 pounds of weapons-grade plutonium, and his men have the upper hand. Now it's up to the Losers to go on the offensive and take it all away from them. $2.99

Lucifer Vol 8 *(The Wolf Beneath the Tree;* Mike Carey & various; *Vertigo;* tpb) Collects issues #45 and #50-54, in which the Lightbringer faces a deadly new threat to both his Creation and that of Yahweh. 160pg $14.99

The Omac Project 3 (Greg Rucka & Jesus Saiz) Once, she was the woman who broke Bruce Wayne's heart. Now, Checkmate agent Sasha Bordeaux might just break Batman's will by revealing the mind-blowing power behind the OMAC Project – unless an OMAC agent gets to Sasha and the Dark Knight first. $2.50

Outsiders 25 *(The Insiders* 4 of 4; Judd Winick & Carlos D'Anda) Lex Luthor and his allies threaten to finish what they started and tear the teams apart. What does Donna Troy have to do with it all? $2.50

Seven Soldiers: Shining Knight 3 (Grant Morrison & Simone Bianchi) Justin and his winged horse Vanguard are faced with earth-shattering choices as the evil Morgayne releases an unstoppable monster whose only mission is to seek out and destroy the Shining Knight! $2.99

Solo 5 (Darwyn Cooke) Slam Bradley is the down-on-his-luck PI guiding you through some of the craziest tales he's ever heard. Thrill to the adventures of King Faraday in Cuba, dig the Question's Middle Eastern math lesson, and attempt to understand a geek's growing passion for his vacuum cleaner. 48pg $4.99

Superman/Batman 22 *(With a Vengeance* 3 of 6; Jeph Loeb & Ed McGuinness + Dexter Vines) After revealing the mysterious puppet master who has deigned to send the Maximums after Superman and Batman, the World's Finest make a daring escape. $2.99

Transgenesis 2025 Vol 1 *(Ancestor Program;* Anne Ploy & Loïc Malnati; tpb) Three students of Octagonia have a mission: to create a model of the supreme god. But when their program is stolen, they find themselves trapped in a deadly worldwide conspiracy. 144pg $17.99

Wonder Woman 218 (Greg Rucka & Rags Morales + Michael Bair) The Amazon Warrior has returned from the Underworld, seemingly triumphant in her mission for Athena...but a lot has changed in her absence. $2.25

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man 521 *(Moving Up* 3 of 6; J. Michael Straczynski & Mike Deodato) Spidey just can't seem to catch a break these days. He's got a great new pad and a cool new clique - so what's the big problem? Oh, not much – just a nefarious worldwide organisation with an ingenious plan to conquer the world! ..... $2.50.

Astonishing X-Men 12 *(Dangerous* 6 of 6; Joss Whedon & John Cassaday) *Dangerous* draws to a finale, and the lives of the X-Men will never be the same. $2.99

Last Hero Standing 5 (of 5; Tom Defalco & Pat Olliffe) A weekly five-part event unites two generations. Spider-Girl, the fantastic five and a-next must join forces with today's superstars to uncover the answer – and the trail leads to a major Avengers villain! Does the presence of the Watcher signify the end of this age of heroes? $2.99

one-shot **Marvel Milestones: Dr Doom, Sub-Mariner & Red Skull** (various) Prince Namor fights single-handed the world's first deep-sea blitzkrieg, from Sub-Mariner Comics #1. 48pg $3.99

New X-Men: Hellions 2 (Christina Weir + Nunzio Defilippis & Clayton Henry) The Hellions are faced with the ultimate temptation: one wish each, a whole new life. What will they wish for? And what will it cost them? $2.99

one-shot **Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe: Fantastic Four 2005** (various) Contains in-depth bios on the family, friends and foes of the Fantastic Four – from Annihilus to the Watcher! 48pg $3.99

new **X-Men: Kitty Pryde – Shadow & Flame** 1 (Akira Yoshida & Paul Smith) A deadly mystery draws Kitty Pryde and her fire-breathing friend Lockheed from the Astonishing X-Men to the shores of Japan. Ninjas and dragons will be the least of their worries! $2.99

Young Avengers 5 *(Sidekicks* 5 of 6; Allan Heinberg & Jim Cheung) The Young Avengers are finally forced to reveal the true nature of their powers as their battle with Kang the Conqueror becomes a fight to the death . $2.99

RELEASED AND ON SALE IN

JUNE

Abstract Studios

Strangers in Paradise 74 (Terry Moore) Katchoo, Casey and David decide to open their own art studio together in Houston. 24pg b&w $2.95

Amaze Ink/ Slave Labor

one-shot **Due** (Michele Petrucci; graphic novel) As a killer murders and mutilates his victims, a collection of professionals and a group of students get involved in a tale of blood and suspicion. 160pg b&w $12.95

new **Emo Boy** 1 (Steve Emond) When a cute blonde begins singing a song Emo Boy wrote, will his emo screw everything up? Learn the dark and mysterious secret Emo Boy has, and then read the interview and learn some less dark and mysterious secrets. 24pg b&w $2.95

Gloomcookie 24 (Serena Valentino & Anthony Guarisco) In the wake of the Carnival Wars, Sebastian suffers guilt for having killed Marguerite, making everyone in his life disappear. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

Little Scrowlie 10 (Todd Meister & Jennifer Feinberg) Scrowlie and Alabaster, having narrowly escaped the confines of Hell, journey to the centre of the suburbs. 24pg b&w $2.95

Nightmares & Fairy Tales 13 (Serena Valentino & Crab Scrambly) An elderly woman named Victoria moves into a house haunted by the victims of horrific torture inflicted by the infamous Madame Lalaurie. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

one-shot **Street Angel** Vol 1 (Jim Rigg & Brian Maruca; tpb) Collects the first five issues. Armed with OTT skateboarding and martial arts skills, 13-year old homeless girl Sanchez fights the forces of evil. 24pg b&w $14.95

Antarctic Press

Gold Digger 65 (Fred Perry) Ryan and Ayane manage to uncover the secret X-Rank training camp of the UFF superstar fighters, and possibly also uncover the answer to the riddle of their teachers' mysterious disappearance. $2.99

one-shot **Heaven Sent Special** (Ben Dunn) *See Close-Up, below.*

I Hunt Monsters Vol 2 #6 (Rod Espinosa & Wes Hartman + Craig Babiar) Monster hunting is hard work, so Will and Aarna head to the shop to stock up. b&w $2.99

close-up

Heaven Sent Special

Antarctic Press

Writer/Artist: Ben Dunn

A new standalone story from the mind of Ben Dunn. A young boy rescues a wounded bird and is rewarded beyond his dreams for his kindness. This vignette is focused on the storytelling strength of Dunn. b&w $2.99

ON SALE JUNE

new **I Hunt Monsters** Vol 1 (Rod Espinosa & Craig Babiar; tpb) Discovering he is heir to the legacy of the Warlock clan, William Warock assumes the guardianship against the forces of the underworld too late to prevent the escape of the Queen of the Undead. 144pg b&w $9.99

one-shot **Junction 17** (David Hutchinson) In the near future, Black Wave is the ultimate in interactive gaming. Now its champion players are under attack by the Ghost. 144pg b&w $9.99

Neotopia Vol 4 (Rod Espinosa) Having travelled half the world, combating enemies and making friends, Nalyn and her crew are ready for the final battle. 168pg $9.99

Ninja High School 129 (Fred Perry) Yumei's beaten all the robots Tetsuo's sent to wed her, so he ups the stakes. b&w $2.99

new **Oz the Manga** 1 (David Hutchinson) The reimagining of L. Frank Baum's classic. Dorothy longs for something more than Kansas. $2.99

new **Warrior Nun Areala Color Manga** Vol 1 (Ben Dunn) Once per generation, the Valkyrie-turned-angel Areala embodies herself in a worthy sister of the Warrior Nun order. Promising young nun Shannon Masters has been chosen. 168pg $9.99

AP Comics

one-shot **Familiar Strangers – The Digital Art of Tim Seelig** (Tim Seelig) From the mind of the artist of Scatterbrained comes a new collection of digital artwork. 140pg $20.00

Dark Mists 2 (of 4; Annika Eade & Lee Garbett) Makoto reveals to Kimi the gruesome details of Emi's death. The government is immediately concerned for Kimi and the other geisha's safety and so they decide that they must learn to defend themselves. $3.50

The Gloom 2 (of 6; Tony Lee & Daniel Boultwood) The Vermillion and the Nazi menace have trapped The Gloom and Mousey in an abandoned warehouse – and only Doc Adventure can help! What shenanigans have the Nazis planned for Houston Aviation? $3.50

The Lexian Chronicles – Full Circle 2 (Harry Gallant + Chris Bunting & Inaki Miranda + Eva de la Cruz) Reena is challenged and fights an older boy. The fight is brutally quick and Reena storms away in anger. As a result of this she makes an astonishing discovery far from home. $3.50

Mr T #2 (Chris Bunting + Neil Edwards & Randy Emberlin + Don MacKinnon) Mr T is back, and he's going to clean up the streets! Top of his hit list is the Padilla crime family, who've brought the neighbourhood into turmoil during his absence. $3.50

new **Scatterbrain** 1 (Brendan Deneen & Tim Seelig) Superhero noir set in Devil's Hopyard, a bleak and crime-ridden city that's seen better days. Detective Jack Anderfold is a once-great cop who's determined to take this new vigilante down in hopes of regaining his former glory. Mature readers. $3.50

Archie Comics

Archie 558 (various & Stan Goldberg) Archie's in the doghouse again-but this time, he's literally stuck in one! Plus, Reggie manages to beat Archie in one water sport competition after another – by lending Archie faulty equipment! $2.19

Archie & Friends (various & Stan Goldberg) The local movie theatre hires Archie and his friends to dress as their favourite heroes and promote the I-Men movie. $2.19

Betty 148 (various & Stan Goldberg) A summer job at a toy company finds Betty consulting the creators of the Action Girl doll on their new line $2.19

Betty & Veronica 210 (Kathleen Webb & Jeff Shultz) Rather than listen to another round of Veronica criticising her wardrobe, Betty allows herself to drift into daydream-land! $2.19

Jughead 166 (Craig Boldman & Rex Lindsey) While at the comicbook convention to support his cartoonist pal, Chuck, Jughead inadvertently creates a popular character on the spot, and ends up stealing Chuck's thunder! $2.19

Sabrina the Teenage Witch 68 (Tania del Rio) With Harvey away for the summer, Sabrina's not looking forward to being Shinji and Llandra's third wheel. $2.19

Sonic the Hedgehog 150-151 (various) After just being in one of the biggest battles of his life, Sonic is faced with an even greater challenge – one that could destroy him once and for all. $2.19

Veronica 162 One day, Veronica meets a typical surfer dude who takes her for a wild ride on his surfboard. The next day, she meets her new maths teacher, who just so happens to be the same guy! $2.19

Avatar Press

one-shot **Stargate SG-1 Ra Reborn Prequel** (James Anthony & Jorge Correa) As Daniel Jackson recounts the story of the first Stargate mission, a familiar presence reappears on Abydonian soil. Has the most feared Goa'uld of all time been reborn from the ashes to terrorize the universe again? 16pg $2.99

new **Brian Pulido's Lady Death: Abandon All Hope** 1 (of 4; Brian Pulido & Ron Adrian) Europe, 1000AD. To save her mother, Hope renounces her humanity and is sentenced to the Blacklands, a realm where magic and monsters run rampant. Now forged into the cold, cruel and alluring warrior Lady Death, she joins forces with the mysterious Wargoth, and the master thief and spell-caster Satasha. $3.99

Brian Pulido's Medieval Lady Death 5 (Brian Pulido & Wellington Alves) Medieval Europe is threatened by a near immortal race called the Eldritch. Humanity's last hope for survival is Lady Death, an outcast who is half-human, half-Eldritch and all attitude. $3.99

Medieval Lady Death / Belladonna ½ (Brian Pulido & Daniel) An ultimate evil threatens Ireland and it will take two supernatural champions to defend these sacred lands. 16pg $2.99

Bongo

Bart Simpson Comics 24 (various) Bart is forced to join the Springfield Elementary cheerleading squad, but will he bring shame to the school? .. $2.99

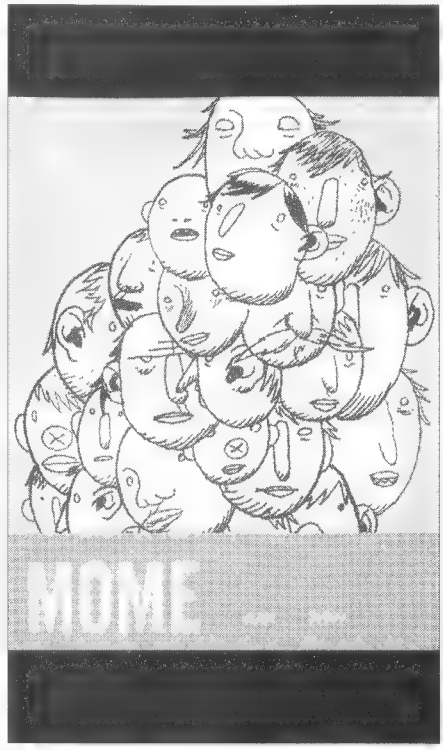
Simpsons Comics 107 (Boothby & Ortiz + Novin) Homer wins Gil's law license in a bar bet, and soon becomes Springfield's newest and hottest lawyer. $2.99

Claypool

Deadbeats 72 (Richard Howell & Ricardo Villagran) The vampiress Brittany makes a breakthrough in her bipolar shifts between her undead self and the human she once was, but the effort may cost her Southie, the one she loves the most. b&w $2.50

Elvira 146 (various) Provocative documentarian Mitchell Mohr claims that horror films desensitise viewers, and Elvira's a doubter, so they wager on whether Rosalind Wyck can be terrified enough to prove the point. b&w $2.50

close-up



Mome Vol 1

Fantagraphics Books

Writers/Artists: various

New quarterly book designed by Jordan Crane that will feature the same collective of artists every issue, with the notion that readers and artists will evolve together over time. This first volume features John Pham's *221 Sycamore Street*, Paul Hornschmeier's six-part graphic novella *Life With Mr Dangerous* and Anders Nilson's absurdist monologue *The Beast* plus work by Kurt Wolfgang, Sammy Harkham and Marc Bell. 136pg $14.95

ON SALE JUNE

Drawn & Quarterly

one-shot **Satiroplastic** (Gary Panter) Gary Panter's sketchbook from December 1999 to November 2001, showing his everyday creative spasms. Single file, please. Mature readers. 220pg b&w $19.95

one-shot **Vernacular Drawings: Collected Seth Sketchbook** (Seth; hb) Collects a decade worth of drawings, ranging from portraits of showgirls to jazz musicians and failed businessmen. Mature readers. 208pg $34.95

El Capitan

Stray Bullets 40 (David Lapham) Virginia Applejack's on a mission to make sure that those responsible for her sorry state wish they had finished the job. Mature readers 24pg b&w .. $3.50

Fantagraphics

Comics Journal Library Vol 5 *(The Great Comics Illustrators;* Tom Spurgeon) Celebrates the work of Frank Frazetta, Burne Hogarth, Mark Schultz and Dave Stevens, in their own words. 176pg b&w $22.95

one-shot **Der Struwwekmaakies** (Tony Millionaire; hb) Third hardcover collection of the Maakies strip, featuring over two years' worth of material. Mature readers. 96pg b&w $19.95

one-shot **Life's a Bitch** (Roberty Gregory) Collects the first half of the Bitchy Bitch saga, ranging widely in her eventful life. Mature readers. 240pg b&w ... $16.95

new **Mome** Vol 1 (various; graphic novel) *See Close-Up, above.*

one-shot **Peculia & The Groon Grove Vampire** (Richard Sala; graphic novel) Follows five college students – survivors of the dark forces of evil – who are summoned seven years after a dastardly event, to defeat the evil again. 80pg b&w $9.95

Raisin Pie 4 (Rick Altergott & Ariel Bordeaux) Another creepy *Blessed Be* episode, filled with maniacs running through the woods. Mature readers. b&w . $3.50

one-shot **Sex, Rock 'n' Roll & Optical Illusions** (Victor Moscoso; hb) Contains Moscoso's best Bay Area rock posters, as well as many of his Zap Comix contributions. 144pg $29.95

Image Comics

Age of Bronze Vol 2 *(Sacrifice;* Eric Shanower) Helen's triumphant entry into Troy is marred by Kassandra's wild prophecies of doom. Collects Age of Bronze #10-19. 225pg b&w $19.95

Age of Bronze 20 *(Betrayal* 1; Eric Shanower) The great warrior Achilles leads a bloody assault on the island of Tenedos and makes a grave mistake that leads him closer to his foretold doom. 24pg b&w $3.50

new **The Amazing Joy Buzzards** Vol 1 (Mark Smith & Dan Hipp; tpb) It's an everyday adventure for The Amazing Joy Buzzards when fighting giant robots, evil witch-doctors, and exploring the supernatural, all with the help of their mystical Mexican wrestler friend El Campeon. Collects The Amazing Joy Buzzards #1-4. 160pg $11.95

one-shot **Avigon: Gods and Demons** (Che' Gilson & Jimmie Robinson; graphic novel) Unveiling the full story of Avigon's journey. A clockwork creation pushed beyond the dark world binding her soul where her true destiny is unlocked. Collects the original Avigon novella, plus over 100 pages of original art. 192pg b&w $19.95

new **Battle Pope** 1 (Robert Kirkman & Tony Moore) When he's not leadin' mass, he's out kickin' ass! I'll leave that with you. $2.95

new **Battle of the Planets: Endgame** 1 (of 2; Munier Sharrieff & Wilson Tortosa; *Top Cow)* Who was the mysterious force seen in the original series? What new peril will he be putting the team into? And how will it result in G-Force battling...itself? b&w 24pg $2.99

new **Blacklight** 1 (Jim Valentino & Scott Wherle + John Toledo) Lina Juarez is stuck in a dead-end job and a dead-end relationship, living a dead-end life in a dead-end town. But when a dark and mysterious power possesses her, she quickly learns the true meaning of the old adage, Be careful what you wish for. $2.99

Case Files: Sam and Twitch 21 *(Fathers and Daughters* 2; Marc Andreyko & Greg Scott) As Sam and Twitch try to unravel who would kill six-year old starlet Lacey Ann Lyons, the world media watches them. b&w $2.50

City of Heroes 2 *(Hard Crash* 2 of 3; Mark Waid & David Nakayama + Sonia Oback; *Top Cow)* Paragon City is under full lockdown! Mysterious foes have forced the city's defenders to come up with a new definition of hero. $2.99

Darkness 21 *(The Reckoning;* Brian Buccellato & Francis Manapul + Kevin Conrad; *Top Cow)* Darkness-bearer Jackie Estacado slips off to Alaska, land of the midnight sun, to escape the all-encompassing darkness. But his trip takes a sour turn when Jackie is confronted by a soul even more tortured than his own – and more powerful. $2.99

Deadworld 2 (Gary Reed & Vince Locke) Trapped and surrounded by zombies, what once was thought to be a sanctuary is instead revealed to be a death trap! b&w $3.50

Death, Jr. 2 (Gary Whitta & Ted Naifeh) The son of the Grim Reaper thought he was just goofing around with an old box at the museum of supernatural history. Unfortunately, he's released an ancient evil with disturbing designs on the family of Death. 48pg $4.99

The Expatriate 4 (B. Clay Moore & Jason Latour) This issue reveals the true scope of Jack's predicament, and, if anything, it's even more horrifying than he could have imagined. Suddenly the fate of Jack Dexter seems tied into the fate of the world $2.95

new **Flak Riot** 1 (Michael O'Hare + Robert Place Napton & Michael O'Hare + Michael Garcia) Zoe Nixxon is a cute, bored, lonely file clerk. She wants a new life and fate gives her that chance when she finds her true calling: hunting for bounties in the lawless dimension known as the O.D. ... $2.95

Flaming Carrot Comics 3 (Bob Burden) Whether he's brawling mutated poultry, carousing with the happy hour shift at the local strip joint, or reciting poetic verse from mill-town rooftops, the Flaming Carrot is truly an icon of the times and a true hero of the working class. b&w $3.50

Freedom Force 6 *(Out of Time;* Eric Dieter & Tom Scioli) Stranded in the prehistoric past, a desperate Freedom Force must ally itself with one enemy in order to defeat another! $2.99

new **Gødland** 1 (Joe Casey & Tom Scioli) Adam Archer is Earth's star-powered champion. But what does his existence mean for the rest of humanity? $2.95

new **Invincible: The Ultimate Collection** Vol 1 (Robert Kirkman & Cory Walker + Ryan Ottley; hb) Collects the first 13 issues along with all the extras from the first three trade paperback volumes and more. 400pg $34.95

one-shot **The Nameless: The Director's Cut** (Joe Pruett & Phil Hester + Bruce McCorkindale; tpb) An evil hides in the shadows of modern day Mexico City, feeding on the thousands of abandoned and unwanted street children that plague the night. Collects the series with new pages and scenes cut from the original version. 128pg b&w $11.95

new **The Ride** Vol 1 (various; tpb) The Ride showcases the tales of a 1968 Camaro and the many lives it alters. Contains five stories featuring bullets, babes, murder and mayhem, all from the driver's seat of a car that exudes muscle and power. 128pg b&w $9.95

new **Small Gods Special** 1 (Jason Rand & Juan E. Ferreyra) Heroes clash as Owen Young and Bobby Pope face off across the interrogation room. But what ulterior purpose has truly brought these men together? $2.95

new **Strange Girl** 1 (Rick Remender & Eric Nguyen) After saving the life of a runt demon named Bloato, bartender, occultist, and all around arse kicker Bethany Black discovers that God is soon returning to wipe the Earth clean of everything unholy. $2.95

The Gift 12 *(Death;* Raven Gregory & Richard Bonk + Sonia Oback) A being of incredible power is stalking the Ancient One, a being that has walked side by side with Enoch throughout the ages. .. $2.99

Girls 2 (Joshua Luna & Jonathan Luna) Like many men, Ethan has always envisioned a dream girl – someone who could defy the mundane trappings of reality and become a living fantasy. But when Ethan's dreams are finally fulfilled, will it really be that fantastic? $2.95

Hero Camp 2 (Greg Thompson & Robbi Rodriguez + Russ Lowery) A quiet day of writing for Eric turns into a fight for survival against Goat and Hook, and only a trio of unlikely heroes stand between Eric and a grisly fate! .. $2.95

Hunter-Killer 4 (Mark Waid & Marc Silvestri + Joe B. Weems V + Steve Firchow; *Top Cow)* Ellis, the young

Ultra-Sapien whose powers just emerged, is trapped inside the Hunter-Killer compound. Worse, he knows that the moment he leaves, the enigmatic man known only as Wolf will find him and kill him. $2.99

The Imaginaries 4 (of 4; Ben Avery + Mike S. Miller & Greg Titus) The Greatmen – a band of rebels following in the footsteps of a fallen hero named Greatman – recruit Superhero G as their new figurehead. $2.95

Invincible 24 (Robert Kirkman & Ryan Ottley + Bill Crabtree) Only once in his career has Invincible been beaten this badly. That time it was his father, Omni-Man, who had done the beating. Who could it be this time? $2.95

The Iron Ghost 2 (Chuck Dixon & Sergio Cariello) The number of suspects continues to narrow as Tannhauser and Volz close in on the identity of The Iron Ghost. $2.95

Mora 3 *(Dying Among The Shadows;* Paul Harmon) These days the sun runs away all too quickly, and hides for far too long. The citizens are left to fend off the creatures that live and feed by the night, and one predator has set his sights on the children. b&w $2.95

The Night Club 3 *(Helluva Party;* Mike Baron & Mike Norton + John Rauch) The devil throws a big party. As the Tall Ships sail up the Charles River, Screwbarb, the Vice President, and several hundred friends crowd the bluffs to witness the marvels of the Apocalypse. $2.95

Noble Causes 12 (Jay Faerber & Fran Bueno) The birth of Zephyr's baby promises to deliver the first half-human, half-Draconian being, an event of worldwide importance. But the paparazzi aren't the only ones hunting mother and child... ..... $2.95

Nyc Mech: Beta Love 22 (Ivan Brandon & Andy MacDonald) When Quentin meets the girl of his dreams, she almost kills 100 people – not least of which is him. But even now, with her gun to his head, all he can do is stare into her eyes. $3.50

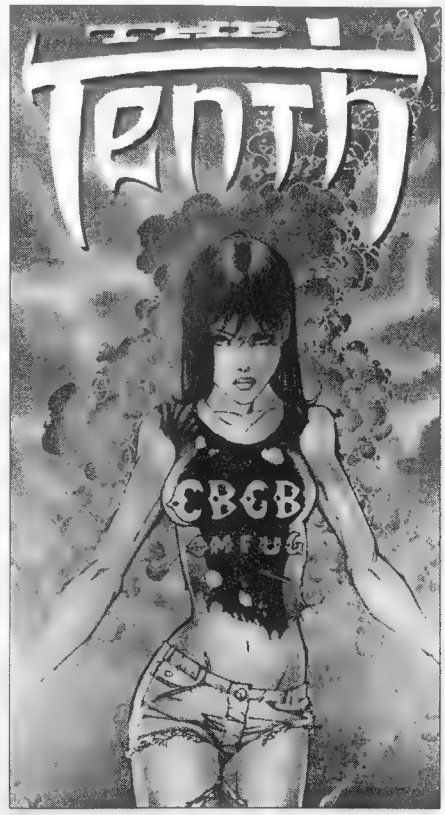
The Pact 3 *(The Life and Death of Quantum Girl;* Phil Hester & Carlos Rodriguez + Lluc Banos) Who is Quantum Girl and why is she leading The Pact? Her mysterious, time-bending powers send our young heroes spiralling into split timelines and alternate universes, each more dire than the last, but are any of them prepared for the sacrifice it will take to put things right? $2.95

PvP 18 (Scott Kurtz) PvP Magazine gets taken to court! When office slobs Robbie and Jase are accused of plagiarism, the gang find themselves in hot water and unable to afford their legal fees. b&w $2.95

Rising Stars: Voices of the Dead 3 (Fiona Avery & Staz Johnson + Wayne Faucher + Steve Firchow; *Top Cow)* Lionel Zerb's minions have been searching hard for another realm where spirits must go when they finally dissipate from this plane of existence. ow they have found it and Lionel may not be able to cope. $2.99

Sea of Red 4 (Rick Remender + Kieron Dwyer & Salgood Sam + Dwyer) With Marco near death, Janine must defeat Blackthroat's secret defense of genetically altered vampires. With an opportunity to either help them or film their fate, Joel chooses to suit his own interests. $2.95

Shadowhawk 2 (Jim Keplinger & Carlos Rodríguez + Albert Puig) The new ShadowHawk's trial by fire continues as he faces ZAP!, a super-fast flyer that fires lightning bolts from his fingers! $2.99



close-up

The Tenth: Darkk Dawn

Image Comics

Writers: James Bonny + Tony Daniel

Artists: Tyler Kirkham + Matt Banning

Tomb Raider scribe James Bonny and Darkness artist Tyler Kirkham get together to show you how it all started. Feast your eyes as the mysteries of the Tenth are revealed. Join Espy, Zorina, and Victor as their lives are forever changed by the sinister experiments of Rhazes Darkk. Rest assured that not only their future, but the future of the whole of humanity, will hang in the balance. 48pg $4.99

ON SALE JUNE

Spawn 147 *(Howl;* Brian Holguin + Todd McFarlane & Angel Medina + Danny Miki) Continuing his journey into the shadowy history at the heart of America, Spawn travels to the icy backwoods of Minnesota. There, in the haunted, snow-covered landscape he discovers a mysterious clan which claims to be 18th century homesteaders. $2.50

one-shot **The Tenth: Darkk Dawn** (James Bonny + Tony Daniel & Tyler Kirkham + Matt Banning + John Starr; *Top Cow) See Close-Up, below.*

one-shot **Tomb Raider: The Greatest Treasure of All** (Dan Jurgens & Joe Jusko; *Top Cow)* Lara thought she had recovered the most precious items history had to offer...until now. Hop on as Lara treks through the jungle of death to experience the unreal. 48pg $6.99

one-shot **Top Cow Triple Play: Freshmen, Necromancer, V.I.C.E.** (various; *Top Cow)* Top Cow rolls out the best of its all-new offerings for 2005 with six-page previews of three great new series. The uproarious Freshmen, V.I.C.E. and Necromancer are fetured! 24pg .. $0.99

The Walking Dead 21 (Robert Kirkman & Charlie Adlard) The world they knew is becoming a distant memory. The camp is adjusting to their new life inside the walls of the prison. Could the dangers of this new world finally be behind them, or is this the calm before the storm? b&w $2.95

Witchblade 87 *(Heart of the City;* Ron Marz & Chris Bachalo + Jon Holdredge; *Top Cow)* Detective Sara Pezzini finds herself with a new job description within the NYPD, and it's not one she's terribly happy about. $2.99

Witchblade vs Frankenstein's Monster: Monster War 3 (Chris Golden + Tom Sniegoski & Joyce Chin + Scott Kester; *Top Cow)* Investigating a series of savage murders at a New York City brothel, Witchblade-bearer Sara Pezzini finds herself face-to-face with the legendary monster of Frankenstein! $2.99

Moonstone

new **Belle Star: Queen of Bandits** 1 (Mark Ricketts & Steve Buccellato) Belle Starr, infamous lady outlaw of the Old West, recounts her life story to an eager journalist. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

one-shot **Boston Blackie: Inside Out** (Stefan Petrucha & Chris Burnham) A woman from Boston Blackie's past comes to him for help. Her son is sitting on Death Row for a murder she knows he did not commit. 48pg b&w ... $4.95

The Phantom 7 (Ben Raab & Pat Quinn + Ken Wheaton) The deadly Sky Bandits hijack a plane carrying four millionaires in a daring caper. .. $3.50

new **Revisionary** 1 (Paul D Storrie & Eric J) Haunted by nightmares of the tragedies he doesn't prevent, Randall Gordon's gift soon leads him to Vegas and forces him to up the ante. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

Oni Press

Little Star 3 (Andi Watson) Simon walks on his folio trying to get a headstart on Brian for the job in the design department. b&w $2.99

new **Northwest Passage** 1 (Scott Chantler) Rupert's Land, 1755. Follow famed adventurer Charles Lord as he and a small band of survivors flee into the wilderness after a bunch of French mercenaries storm England's Fort Newcastle. 72pg b&w $5.95

Queen & Country: Declassified Vol 3 #2 (Greg Rucka & Antony Johnston + Christopher Mitten) Liam Finnegan continues his plot for revenge against those who sent him to prison, and Lauren Mullen continues her call for an armistice in Northern Ireland. Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Sirius

Dogwitch 17 (Daniel Schaffer) An empty glass, left over from one of Violet's homemade ouija boards, gives Ralph the ability to view other peoples' memories. Mature readers. 24pg $2.95

Poison Elves Ventures 2 *(Lynn;* Keith Davidson & Aaron Bordner) Explore the secret origin of Lynn. Swept away by stories of the legendary criminal, a young girl named Lydia attempts to piece together Luce's past. Mature readers. b&w $3.50

Tokyopop

new **Arcana** Vol 1 (of 3; So-Young Lee) Inez is a young orphan girl with a special gift that allows her to communicate with all creatures. A great destiny awaits her, of which she is yet unaware. 192pg b&w $9.99

Arm of Kannon Vol 6 (Masakazu Yamaguchi) Now that Masayoshi Garama finally posses both the sacred Angel-Fist and the ever elusive Holy Grail, he believes he will finally be able to grasp his dream of becoming immortal. However, he will need to deal with Rou and Shadow Bright-Ring – the guardians of the Angel-Fist. On the other hand, the Bright-Ring brothers will need to face Garama's new guard, Shinjuro, in order to take the Angel-Fist and Holy Grail back. 192pg b&w (6 of 8) . $9.99

new **Blazin' Barrels** Vol 1 (of 18; Min-Suh Park) When Sting comes across a notice that advertises a reward for the criminal outfit named Gold Romany, he decides that capturing the all-girl gang of bad guys is his ticket to fame and fortune! 192pg b&w $9.99

Cardcaptor Sakura – 100% Authentic Manga Vol 6 (of 6; CLAMP) Sakura has collected all of the Clow Cards, but her quest is not over yet. Unless she can pass the final trial, the cards will unleash a terrible curse. 192pg b&w $9.99

Crescent Moon Vol 6 (of 6; Haruko Iida) In a desperate move, Nozomu and the Moonlight Bandits send Hokuto and Mutsura a ransom note, telling them to bring the stolen Teardrop of the Moon to a prearranged location, or Hokuto's fiancé will be killed. 192pg b&w $9.99

Dead End Vol 2 (of 4; Shohei Manabe) When Shirou, Gips and Parrot try to convince Mr. Q to join up with them, he agrees – for the right price. $9.99

Instant Teen: Just Add Nuts Vol 4 (of 4; Haruka Fukushima) Rejected at every advance for the cute guys that she fawns over, Natsumi Kawashima finally given a lucky break when she picks up a package of mysterious pink nuts that are only for adults. 192pg b&w $9.99

Mouryou Kiden: Legend of the Nymph Vol 3 (of 3; Tamayo Akiyama) All the answers seem to lie in Fuyouden, so Ayaka travels there in order to find out the truth about her past, and to once again attempt to rescue her beloved Kai. 192pg b&w $9.99

new **Tokyo Mew Mew A La Mode** Vol 1 (of 2; Reiko Yoshida & Mia Ikumi) With Mew Ichigo studying abroad in London, the remaining four girls from Cafe Mew Mew are one too few. Luckily, a new Mew is about to emerge. 192pg b&w $9.99

Saiyuki Vol 8 (of 9; Kazuya Minekura) Sanzo, Goku and Hakkai are out to find 'God'–and Gojyo. At the same time, Gojyo climbs the seemingly endless stairway to heaven and is assailed by a very maternal monster. 192pg b&w ... $9.99

Samurai Deeper Kyo Vol 13 (of 27; Akimine Kamijyo) As the blazing battle between Benitora, Sasuke and Jiji Funjin heats up, Bentenmaru and Yuya jump out of the frying pan and into the fire... Firefly that is. 192pg b&w $9.99

one-shot **Spongebob Squarepants: Gone Nutty!** (various) Sandy tries to prove to the rest that land animals are better than sea creatures and dares them to venture onto dry land with her. 96pg $7.99

Ai Yori Aoshi Vol 9 (Kou Fumizuki) When Kaoru receives too much chocolate on Valentine's Day... he might just end up tossing a few cookies. 192pg b&w $9.99

Alichino Vol 2 (of 3; Kouyu Shurei) The Alichino's dominance over the human race may be at its end with the emergence of Tsugiri, a quiet young man with the power to kill their kind. 160pg b&w $9.99

B'tx Vol 9 (of 16; Masami Kurumada) Teppei doesn't know what to do when Meimu appears and sends him into a deep sleep. In this dream world Teppei sees Kotaro chopping the heads off of young women. 192pg b&w $9.99

Chronicles of the Cursed Sword Vol 12 (of 16; Yeo Beop-Ryong & Park Hui-Jin) As the forces of the Demon Emperor move in for a showdown with the army of the Heavenly Realm, Rey and the others continue their assault on the Sorcerer King in their effort to reunite Lady Hyacia with her essence and save her life. 192pg b&w $9.99

CLAMP No Kiseki Vol 2 (of 12; CLAMP) Features an in-depth look at Cardcaptor Sakura and offers the essential guides to Clover and The One I Love. $29.99

D.N.Angel Vol 8 (of 10; Yukiru Sugisaki) The Artist and the Thief Dark has retrieved the painting from Riku...but the sisters decide to get it back. 192pg b&w $9.99

Faeries' Landing Vol 9 (of 14; You Hyun) Yuri and Bast have been plotting against Fanta and her friends for weeks now, and things are about to come to a head. 192pg b&w $9.99

Fruits Basket Vol 9 (Natsuki Takaya) While Tohru struggles through bipolar days of hope and anxiety, what will happen when Yuki comes face-to-face with the new member of the student council? 192pg b&w $9.99

Getbackers Vol 9 (of 26; Yuya Aoki & Rando Ayamine) After Shido takes the defeated Emishi to the mysterious old healer Gen, they watch a live feed of the other fights from Gen's computer. 192pg b&w $9.99

Hyper Police Vol 3 (of 9; Minoru Tachikawa) While chasing down a bounty, Natsuki finds herself in an all-male bathhouse...with explosive results! 192pg b&w $9.99

Initial D Vol 18 (of 29; Shuichi Shigeno) It's motor madness as the match between Tohru's Miata and Tak's Trueno race to the edge of excitement. 192pg b&w $9.99

Jing: King of Bandits – Twilight Tales Vol 4 (of 6; Yuichi Kumakura) Jing and Kir arrive in the funeral district of Moulin Rouge where things are dead. They discover the reason for this is because everyone in love there has to pay a love tax! 192pg b&w $9.99

Legal Drug Vol 3 (of 4; CLAMP) Sent by Kakei to enrol in a mysterious high school deep in the mountains, the boys must retrieve an equally mysterious ring. 192pg b&w $9.99

Love Or Money Vol 3 (of 5; Sang-Eun Lee) Yenni's wealthy grandmother is shocked at Yenni's loan shark business, and decides to change the financial arrangements for the money she's leaving to her granddaughter in her will. 192pg b&w $9.99

Mahoromatic: Automatic Maiden Vol 6 (of 8; Bunjuro Nakayama & Bow Ditama) As the time runs out for her, Mahoro begins contemplating the nature of her soul, or if she has even one. 192pg b&w $9.99

Neck and Neck Vol 3 (of 4; Sun-Hee Lee) When Dabin starts staying late at school so she can win her midterm exams competition against Shihu, the lack of sleep makes her weak. 192pg b&w $9.99

President Dad Vol 3 (of 6; Rhim Ju-Yeon) Ami, a freshman in high school, has her life completely turned upside-down when her father Won Ho-Chan is elected President of Korea. What's a girl to do? 192pg b&w $9.99

Princess Ai Vol 2 (of 3; *Lumination;* various) When a scandal surfaces involving a love triangle between Ai, Kent and Hikaru, the media attention seems like it will be the perfect boost for her new album release – how convenient! 192pg b&w $9.99

Psychic Academy Vol 8 (of 11; Katsu Aki) As Ai and Mew struggle with the emotional implications of their Para Dream, an unknown aura attacks the Academy. 192pg b&w $9.99

Rave Master Vol 15 (of 29; Hiro Mashima) While hitching a ride on Doryu's battleship, we're attacked by the Pumpkin dude's monstrous minions... 192pg b&w $9.99

Rebirth Vol 14 (of 18; Woo) When the would-be Vampire Lord Grey captures Millenear, Deshwitat and the gang race to her rescue. 192pg b&w $9.99

Rebound Vol 14 (of 18; Yuriko Nishiyama) Scratch is doing well enough in the three-on-three tournament, but the joke might just be on Johnan. 192pg b&w $9.99

Slayers Vol 4 (of 6; Hajime Kanzaka & Rui Araizumi) Employed as guards, Lina and Gourry accompany Sylpheel to Saillune City. Unfortunately, the royal family feud is downright deadly. Can they help Prince Philionel survive assassination attempts and keep their own heads on straight? 192pg b&w $9.99

The Tarot Cafe Vol 2 (of 4; Park Sang Sung) Meet Aaron, an accidental werewolf with a painful past of abuse and abandonment, seeking an answer to his problem. 192pg b&w $9.99

UK Newsstand

Black Library

one-shot **Complete Liber Chaotica** (various; hb) This is a study of each Chaos power – Khorne, Slaanesh, Nurgle, Tzeentch and Chaos Unidivided. A dark fount of corrupted knowledge! 416pg £30

DC Thomson

The Beano 3256-3259 (weekly; various) Classic kids humour anthology featuring the adventures of Dennis the Menace, the Bash Street Kids, and all your favourites. £0.55

Beano Superstars 160 (various) One complete strip of the long-running humour anthology. 36pg £0.65

Classics from the Comics 106 (various) Anthology reprinting classic cartoon strips from DC Thomson's Beano and Dandy. 68pg b&w £1.20

Commando Action and Adventure Stories 3774-3781 (eight per month; digest; various) Featuring one self-contained comic strip per issue, with soldierly undercover action. Some new material. 68pg b&w £1.00

The Dandy 3286-3289 (weekly; various) Classic kids humour anthology featuring Desperate Dan, Korky the Cat, and all your favourites. £0.55

Fun-Size Beano 177-178 (fortnightly; various) Pocket-sized spin-off from the Beano featuring Dennis the Menace, the Bash Street Kids, Mini the Minx and all the usual suspects. 68pg £0.60

Panini Comics

Astonishing Spider-Man 128 (four-weekly; various) *The Death of Jean DeWolff* continues, as Spider-Man and Daredevil discover the shocking identity of the Sin Eater. Reprints Amazing volume 2 #57-58 and Spectacular volume 1 #109. 76pg £2.40

Avengers United 55 (four-weekly; various) As Doctor Doom watches, Iron Man and Thor clash, forever changing the Avengers! Collects Avengers volume 3 #63, Iron Man volume 3 #64 and Avengers volume 1 #110 76pg .. £2.40

Batman: Legends 22 (four-weekly; various) James Gordon is tasked with bringing the Dark Knight down in the dramatic second chapter of Batman: Year One! Reprints Batman #630, #405 and Batman: Gotham Knights #59. 76pg £2.40

Doctor Who Magazine 358 (four-weekly; various) The continuing all-new comic strip adventures of the Ninth Doctor and Rose. 68pg £3.99

Essential X-Men 128 (four-weekly; Morrison & Quitely + Jimenez) Emma Frost faces a moment of reckoning this issue, with shocking consequences for the team. Reprints New X-Men 138-140. 76pg £2.40

new **Fantastic Four Adventures** 1 (four-weekly; Kesel + Lee & Bagley+ Kirby) Bumper first issue packed with new adventures and the classic origins of the Fantastic Four and Doctor Doom, and on the history of Marvel's First Family! Collects FF volume 3 #51-52, Annual #2 and volume 1 #1.100pg £2.40

Marvel Rampage 8 (four-weekly; various) Packed with features and original comic strips featuring the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, Spider-Man and many others! 44pg £1.75

Mighty World of Marvel 32 (four-weekly; various) Reprints Thing/She Hulk: The Long Night #1, Daredevil volume 1 #7, Captain Britain #7 and Avengers volume 1 #88. 76pg ... £2.40

Ultimate Fantastic Four 3 (four-weekly; Bendis & Millar + Kubert) The Fantastic Four race to rescue Sue Richards from the Mole Man! Reprints Ultimate FF #5-6. 52pg £1.95

Ultimate Spider-Man & X-Men 44 (four-weekly; various) Gwen Stacy is dead and Peter confronts the truth about the origin of her killer, Carnage! Collects Ultimate Spider-Man #63 and Ultimate X-Men #54. 52pg £1.95

Wolverine & Deadpool 114 (four-weekly; various) Logan comes face to face with a being he has never met but who knows everything about him! Reprints Wolverine: The End #3, Wolverine: Xisle #2 and Deadpool #3. 76pg £2.40

Rebellion

2000AD #1441-1445 (various) There's murder and intrigue with Judge Dredd in *Blood Trails* by Gordon Rennie and Andrew Curry, while Slaine faces off for the final time against Lord Odacon. £1.75

2000AD Extreme Edition 10 (bi-monthly; various) Collecting the best of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic, in which Tharg opens his high security Thrill Archives to re-release little-seen gems. 116pg £2.99

Judge Dredd Megazine 232 (monthly; various) Judge Dredd stars in *The Monsterus Mashinashuns of PJ Maybe* and Devlin Waugh stars in *All Hell.* 100pg £4.50

Striker 3D

Striker 84-85 (weekly; Pete Nash & various) Football comic starring ex-Sun newspaper Warbury Warriors. . £1.50

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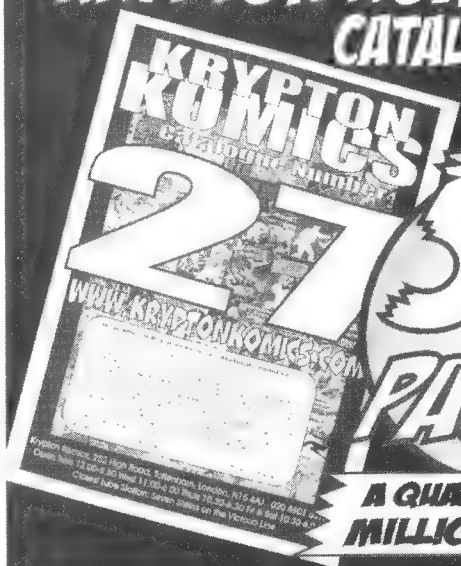

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Comics Creators: Be afraid. Rich Johnston may not be Lying In The Gutter any more, but he will return next month!

Networks

Comics news and gossip on the Internet

Compiled by Chris Rice and his team of Netmites

Net notes

Chaos Returns

Dan Jolley, the outgoing **Firestorm** writer, has posted some interesting news on his messageboard: *As some of you may know, a little while ago I spent about a year writing the series **Purgatori** for Brian Pulido's Chaos! Comics. I worked on the title right up until the company shut down; in fact, I had several scripts done that, sadly, never saw print. And when Chaos! as a whole disappeared, I figured that was the last I'd ever see of the Chaos! Universe.*

Happily, I couldn't have been more wrong.

Chaos! is coming back with a vengeance, under new ownership and new management, and I'm coming back with them. Now, I can't say anything yet about what I'll be working on, or about what titles are underway, or about who I'll be working with, but that information should be forthcoming over the next few weeks and months.

And the lineup is pretty impressive, if I do say so myself – you're going to be surprised and very pleased.

Chaos was bought in auction two years ago by online retailer *Tales of Wonder*, but it's not yet known whether they'll be publishing their own books or working with a publisher like Avatar or Devil's Due, who are currently publishing, respectively, **Lady Death** and an **Evil Ernie/ Hack/ Slash** crossover.

Hell to Come

Mike Mignola, a little quiet since the *Hellboy* film, has been interviewed on the *Comic Book Resources* site, giving a little information about the upcoming Hellboy mini-series, **The Island**, and revealing his plans for the future of the character: *This story is very odd in that it's very much the end of the first chapter of Hellboy's life, the first six trade paperbacks kind of end here, and then the next Hellboy miniseries, which Lee Bermejo is drawing that I'm writing, begins a whole new phase of Hellboy's life. In a very real way, this is the wrap-up. This is kind of transitioning Hellboy from one kind of character to another kind of character – from one kind of story to another kind of story.*

The whole first chunk of the Hellboy adventures is about avoiding having any kind of mission in life, other than 'Yeah, my job is to fight monsters.' What the next chapter... ends up being about is, you have a very specific mission – a very specific goal. And this first chapter has been a lot of Lovecraft kind of stuff.

We've introduced the folklore elements, (and) my own kind of Lovecraft mythology that is being dealt with in the BPRD. This new chapter of Hellboy is very, very folklore-oriented. So this story, in a way, is me making my big statement about the kind of fake 'Lovecraftian' mythology.

Hellboy is becoming a very different kind of character than he was and his journey is going to be much more in the folklore kind of realm, and walking that gray line between the real world and the shadowy folklore world.

Mignola also reveals that director Guillermo DelToro is currently hard at work on a sequel to last year's movie, and for more information about the series, see the story on *Comicbook Resources*.

April Fools

As usual the web featured a whole host of japery this April the first. *Millarworld*, now back up and running after its recent downtime, hosted the following headlines on its rumour boards: *Millar/Romita sign for 2nd year on Wolverine, "We're having a ball-- why quit?"; Moore and Gibbons on **All-Star Justice League**, **Watchmen** team reunites; and Byrne on **Batman**, Perez on **Firestorm**, what is DC thinking?* All led to April Fools messages of course.

Rich Johnston posted a fake story about a **Wizard: Frank Miller Special**, featuring: *...a tribute to Frank Miller by John Byrne, exclusively written and drawn by Byrne for **Wizard**. Each edition will also come with a CD "commentary track" by Frank Miller to be played alongside the DVD release of* Elektra. *Issues will not be solicited in the regular **Diamond Previews** but will be matched to orders of the **Sin City** trades. In order to make returns easier for retailers, each copy will have an embossed dotted line so the magazine can be torn down the middle.*

Unfortunately Mark Millar appears to have been in a particularly bad mood that day, and picked a fight with Rich over a minor anecdote Rich wrote, eventually challenging what he considered to be Rich's prying into the personal lives of creators and their families.

After a lengthy argument, during which Brian Bendis got involved, peace broke through, with all parties shaking hands. Check out the boards for the full and lengthy discussion.

The prize for funniest stories, however, went to the wittiest woman in comics, Heidi McDonald at *The Beat*. Alongside a story about Bob Wayne and Joe Quesada writing and drawing a new Tokyopop manga called **LITTANy UN?R BOATS*S** under the pseudonyms Fukuto and Margo Channing, was the following gem: *Iconoclastic cartoonist Dave Sim has made a surprise return from retirement following his historic 300 issue run on **Cerebus**. Even more surprising is his choice of material: **Sue Dibny: Before The Charring**, a six-issue mini series from DC Comics. "Sue is an unusually perceptive character to come from a superhero publisher," Sim commented.*

*"She's already met the male Light and paid the price. **Identity Crisis** was a clear example of what happens when superheroes marry – it's just not a good idea, because the women will end up getting emotional and killing each other."*

Networks so wishes this were a real comic...

Return of WEF

Last year Warren Ellis staged a one day relaunch of the

Warren Ellis Forum—the much missed comics messageboard and online community—on April Fools day, and many thought he might do it again this year.

He didn't, but only because he surprised everyone by doing it on March 18, and for a mere 12 hours.

However, in that 12 hours an incredible 970 people joined up, with almost 3,500 posts. Ellis moderated for the whole time, consuming enormous amounts of coffee and being his usual unique self, and at the 12th hour mark he locked it up and set it adrift in cyberspace.

You can go see at *warren ellis.suddenlaunch3.com*.

Millar '06

After months of rumour over who will be writing **Thor**, we now know it definitely won't be Mark Millar.

He explained his current plans on the ever-present *MillarWorld* message board:

*Greg and I decided to do **Ultimate Fantastic Four** instead of **Thor**. We aren't doing **Thor** after this. **UFF** is my last Marvel project I do under my contract and then I'm taking a huge break, focusing only on the Millar-world stuff for 06. No plans for anything at Marvel beyond this, but this may change in the future.*

Absolutely no hassles with Marvel or anything (I love them to death), but I'm just disappearing for a while and will be focusing on MW2 when I get back.

Personally, I'd love to see Oeming on the **Thor** book. Maybe we should start a petition. His *Ragnarok* story arc was fantastic.

No Sex Please, We're Fanboys

The recent online petition to help Bill Messner-Loebs seems to have had some success, with Bill apparently due to script an issue of **Green Arrow** later this year, alongside some indy comics work he'll be doing.

There's also a new petition doing the rounds, but it doesn't seem like it'll have quite as much effect as the last one. This is a call for a clear separation of non-comicbook, pornographic booths from comicbook-related booths at all comicbook conventions.

Comicbooks, as other forms of entertainment, are created for all ages. Some books are for children, others for adults, while some appeal to a wide range of age groups. The issue the undersigned of this petition are concerned with is pornography that has no relation to comicbooks whatsoever.

While some adult comicbooks feature nudity and/or sexual content, they are still comicbooks first. It damages the credibility and affects potential sales of comicbook creators when their booths are positioned directly alongside pornographic booths that have no basis in comicbooks.

When families can no longer walk the aisles of a Comicbook Convention without worrying about coming face to face with non-comicbook based pornography, it detracts from the entire industry, and makes it that much more difficult to gain momentum.

Despite some fairly big creators signing, there are only 159 signatures at the moment.

Networks suspects that the vast majority of US fanboys are quite happy to have half-naked women wander around their comic cons.

Chris Bunting's COMICS WEBWORLD

D. C. THOMSON **www.dcthomson.co.uk**

Although most, if not all, UK comic fans will know who D.C. Thomson is, for the benefit of any overseas readers, I'll explain. Founded a hundred years ago this year (yes, I did say a hundred), this publisher has week-in and week-out since the late 1930s brought us two truly iconic British comics: **The Beano** and **The Dandy**. Equally impressive is that even today these titles are just about the best-selling comics in the country. While this main site is more commercially-orientated than fan-orientated, it does link directly to the comics' own lively sites, while also providing a store where you can purchase the hardback annuals and other merchandise. **7**

DYNAMIC FORCES **www.dynamicforces.com**

New Jersey-based Dynamic Forces isn't your typical publisher. It doesn't publish original work of its own (at least nothing yet, although that could be about to change), nor does it simply turn out reprints. What it does do is publish exclusive limited edition variants of popular contemporary comic books. My personal favourite that I've just had to order is the Peter David-signed **Incredible Hulk** #77 with a DF holo-foil sticker. The exclusive foil cover **Witchblade** #80 looks tempting too, as does the **Ultimate Iron Man** #1 with black and white cover. Throw lithographs and action figures into this cool and vibrant site, and you can soon find yourself with an empty wallet! **8**

TITAN PUBLISHING **www.titanmagazines.com**

A leading UK publisher of graphic novels and TV and film tie-in books and magazines, Titan in fact covers just about every modern and popular franchise. Its graphic novels range from **Batman: Arkham Asylum Anniversary Edition** to **CSI: Miami**, while its magazines range from **Bratz** to **Dreamwatch**. The publisher even runs the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* UK fan clubs. There's no denying the huge range of choice on offer, and this smooth and seasoned site is the best place to come to find out more. **8**

VIPER COMICS **www.vipercomics.com**

This publisher burst onto the scene in late 2001 with its headliner title, **Dead@17**. In the brief time since, Viper has come a long way with other such intriguing titles as its **Oddly Normal** and **Random Encounter**, all of which are detailed here. The site is impressively mature for such a new player, and it puts many other publisher sites to shame thanks mainly to its behind-the-scenes information via interviews and message boards. **7**

Honourable mention: **Abiogenesis Press [www.abiogenesis.co.uk]**

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Panel Beaters

Comics International's look at the full size original artwork of some of comics' greatest talents

OWNING original comics art is a growing aspect of our industry. But because of the very nature of the work quantity is limited, which leads to it being out of the reach of most collectors' budgets.

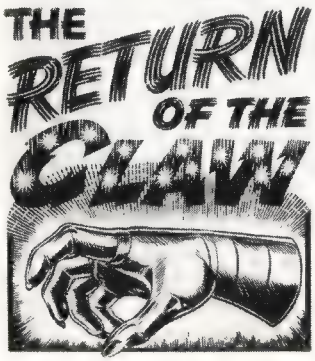
In order to show the sheer beauty of originals, their detail often lost through colouring and commercial printing processes, *Panel Beaters* presents a look at individual frames from comics originals printed their full size.

Across coming months, it is our intention to showcase the best of comics art, as produced by leaders in the field, from the past or the present.

Art collectors who would like to share their treasures with our readership can email us at *comicsinternational@yahoo.com* with suggestions and sample jpgs, or write to **Panel Beaters, Comics International, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ, East Sussex**.

VALIANT & TV21: RETURN OF THE CLAW detail (1971) drawn by Jesus Blasco

THE ATMOSPHERE ON THE WORLD OF THE LEKTRONS IS SIMILAR TO THE ELECTRICAL CHARGE THAT EXISTS WITHIN CRANDELL'S BODY! WE MUST RE-EXAMINE HIS POWERS, OR IT MAY TAKE US MONTHS TO PREPARE FOR THE INVASION OF OUR MASTERS!



ALONGSIDE the adventures of Scott Goodall and Eric Bradbury's Cursitor Doom (**Smash**, 1969-70), **Valiant**'s *Return of the Claw* must rate as one of the major high points in the history of spine-tingling adventure strips. From Tom Tully scripts for this revamp 1971-1973 sequel to the original nine-year series which had faltered in its later years, Jésus Blasco hit a peak with his stunning visuals, of possessed children with insect-eyes and a disembodied gantlet striking from nowhere.

The serial was planned to be collected by Quality as a follow-up to its four-issue **Steel Claw** colour mini (1986), but both the editorial and finance partners bailed out in mid-'87 and the remaining print-contracting Spanish partner reverted to less experimental material. Only now, through Titan Books' new series, will this world class work be again available.

Blasco drew all the early Steel Claw strips for the series which ran from **Valiant** #1 (1962) to 1970, but a variety of writers including mainstays H Ken Bulmer, Scott Goodall and Ken Mannell wrote Louis Crandell's tales, from his petty crook roots, to his pseudo-James Bond British Secret Service adventures, his time as a detective, as a bounty hunter and even his – fortunately short-lived – superhero period.

When Blasco quit the original Claw run in 1968, he was replaced by the wonderful Spanish craftsman Carlos Cruz and an assortment of lesser artists from Italy's Alberto Giolitti Studio, with Giorgio Cambiotti pencilling, Massimo (**2000AD**) Belardinelli on backgrounds and shared inking with Sergio Rosi. Blasco's early pages were also reprinted in colour in IPC's **Vulcan** (1975), retitled **Kobra** for European editions.

THEY'RE PROBABLY OUT THERE, RIGHT NOW... SEARCHING FOR ME! THE LITTLE FIENDS NEED MY ELECTRICALLY-CHARGED BODY, SO THAT THEY CAN COMPLETE THEIR INFERNAL PROJECT...!

Note change of letterer between episodes (Jack Potter to John Aldrich?) and little use of set squares in those pre-computer days!

THE RETURN OF CLAW Chap 2nd 27

SOME TIME LATER, AS CRANDELL RETURNED TO PAINFUL, THROBBING, CONCIOUSNESS...
UUU-NNNH! WHAT... WHERE... AM I?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, FRIEND... NO NEED TO BE ALARMED! YOU'RE QUITE SAFE NOW!
LUCKY FOR YOU THAT YOU CHOSE MY BACK GARDEN AS A HIDING-PLACE!
GOOD GRIEF! YOU... PROFESSOR BARRINGER!
CRANDELL GASPED AS HE RECOGNISED HIS ONE-TIME EMPLOYER: IT WAS IN PROFESSOR BARRINGER'S LABORATORY THAT HE HAD ACCIDENTALLY GAINED THE POWER OF INVISIBILITY, MANY YEARS BEFORE...
BEEN A... LONG TIME, PROFESSOR! I EXPECT YOU'RE WONDERING HOW I CAME BY ALL THESE INJURIES?
NOT REALLY! I'VE BEEN... ER... FOLLOWING YOUR RECENT EXPLOITS IN THE NEWSPAPERS! BUT, HERE, DRINK THIS...!
...AND DON'T TRY ANY FALSE MOVES! ONE WORD FROM ME, AND RANGER WILL BE AT YOUR THROAT!
SO YOU BELIEVE IT, TOO.. THAT THE STEEL CLAW WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE ROBBERIES?
BY THE TIME CRANDELL HAD FINISHED, THE PROFESSOR'S FACE WAS A MIXTURE OF SHOCK AND DISBELIEF...
BOYS... THEIR MINDS POSSESSED BY AN ALIEN INTELLIGENCE? PLANNING TO TAKE OVER THE EARTH? GREAT SCOTT, CRANDELL! IT'S THE MOST FANTASTIC THING I'VE EVER HEARD...!
BUT IT'S TRUE, PROFESSOR! BELIEVE ME...
THEY'RE PROBABLY OUT THERE, RIGHT NOW... SEARCHING FOR ME! THE LITTLE FIENDS NEED MY ELECTRICALLY-CHARGED BODY, SO THAT THEY CAN COMPLETE THEIR INFERNAL PROJECT...
YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I CAN TURN TO, PROFESSOR! BY COMBINING OUR SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, WE MAY BE ABLE TO STOP THE LEKTRON PLOT... BEFORE BRITAIN FINDS ITSELF BEING RULED BY A BUNCH OF KIDS!

WILL THE CLAW BE able TO ENLIST BARRINGER'S HELP? FIND OUT IN NEXT MONDAY'S SPECIAL NUMBER!

Jésus Blasco: 1919-1995

The eldest of five brothers, the multi-award winning Barcelona-born Jésus Blasco was considered a master of Spanish comics. By the age of 15 his first illustrations were published in the Spanish edition of the Disney magazine **Mickey** while for **Boliche** magazine, he created *Cuto*, one of his best-known characters. By 1940, the 21-year old had already produced several action and science-fiction comics.

But it was in the mid-1960s when his international career and reputation was consolidated through working for London's Amalgamated Press/IPC Magazines/Fleetway. He contributed 64-page strips to **Thriller Picture Library** and **Cowboy Picture Library** while for their **Sun**, **Çomet**, **Lion**, **Look & Learn**, **Tiger** and **Valiant** weeklies he drew *Billy the Kid*, *Buffalo Bill*, *Robin Hood*, *Dick Turpin*, *Val Venture* and many others, but most notably *The Steel Claw*.

A prolific pen and ink artist, in 1968 his work began in France. He started *Los Guerilleros* in **Spirou** where he also drew *Paul Foran*, while under his own name and the pseudonym Montero, he also drew for **L'Echo des Savanes**.

From the end of the seventies to the early eighties, Jésus Blasco and brothers Alejandro and Adriano worked on **Une Bible en Bande Dessinée** from a script by Claude Moliterni.

For Italy, Blasco then drew the country's top-selling western hero **Tex Willer** and then back to Spain for the 1956-launched crusader **Capitan Trueno** (Captain Thunder) by writer Victor Mora, with whom he also worked on the medieval series **Tallafero** (1987).

Like his artist brothers Pili, Alejandro and Adriano, he dedicated his life to comics around the world, right up until his death in 1995.

*Above: Garry Leach cover to Quality's **Steel Claw** #1. Left: 1967's first issue of IPC's 132-page **Fantastic Series** "super library" which, across 26 issues, alternated between complete strips of Steel Claw and The Spider.*

Reviews

*Because few retailers allow titles to be read before purchase, **CI**'s comprehensive reviews section enables comics readers to keep abreast of the wide range of titles currently being published and draw readers' attention to comics they might otherwise ignore. Naturally, this section is of even greater benefit to readers who rely solely on mail order, as they can only judge the quality of a title after purchase.*

***Review codes:** Individual titles are judged against all similar comics past and present on a **1** to **10** basis, while a comparison is made against previous issues of the same title, ranging from <---> to <+++>. Hence, a quality comic may score an 8 against all others, but have slid from a previous issue's 9, denoted by <->. No change is marked <=>. We do not compare **Bone** with **X-Men**, but review each within their genre.*

***Review panel:** Jon Edwards (JE), Kelvin Green (KG), Christine Harper (CH), Stephen Hooker (SH), David Knight (DK), Scott Montgomery (SM), Kieron Mullens (KM), Ian Murphy (IM), Alex Thompson (MAT)*

Dark Horse

Concrete: The Human Dilemma 1

by Chadwick

Concrete is asked to be the public face of a population control campaign, and Larry proposes to Astra. Paul Chadwick's thoughtful Thing-like rocky hero reflects on the human instinct to only react to the here and now rather than see the bigger picture, in this thoughtful discussion that's unsubtle but leavened with gentle, unchallenging humour. Chadwick's talented pencils are a little obvious, perhaps too close to the writer's perspective, but have a soft, old-fashioned charm. (IM) 6

Manga Darkchylde 1

by Queen & Oates

Avoiding wisecracks about the name, Randy Queen's re-imagining of his Darkchylde creation as a hybrid of Japanese and American stylings works really well. Visually, it's excellent; the storytelling is rather confused at times, but it's an invariably beautiful kind of confused. Storywise, things are simple yet oblique. An all-ages title, although you may find it a little too dark for the under-10s. Mostly terrific. (CH) 8

DC Comics

Batman: Gotham Knights 63

by Lieberman & Barrionuevo + Bit

<-> Since *Hush* became obsessed with Poison Ivy, every issue of Gotham Knights has been too much like the one before it. What makes it worse is that writer A.J. Lieberman's characterisation of Poison Ivy is way off beam. Al Barrionuevo and Bit do a passable job of the art, ably coloured by Brad Anderson, but the story is totally misconceived. (DK) 5

The Batman Strikes! 7

by Methany & Jones + Beatty

<=> Cool customer Mr Freeze is the latest member of the Gotham Rogues Gallery to square up against the young Batman. Has the nascent Caped Crusader met his match in the formidable form of Freeze? This enjoyable DC kids title has an effective storyline, snappy artwork, and some fine, moody colouring. It's just a pity about the intrusive ads every three pages or so – no doubt a common complaint among DC readers. (SM) 7

Blood of the Demon 1

by Byrne + Pfeifer & Nekros

John Byrne's revival of this lesser '70s Kirby gig works fairly well. His artwork is more inspired (and bloody) than in quite a while, making this an attractively dark book. Will Pfeifer's script is fine in its unremarkable functionality and Byrne's plot, while rather flimsy – like the original – is well executed. The final splash is excellent. A better than average example of mainstream horror comics. (CH) 7

Deadshot 4

by Gage & Cummings + Palmiotti

<-> Christos N. Gage has fun pitting Deadshot against a bullet-proof adversary in his opening scene, before exploring the question of how Floyd Lawton could get by in the role of a family man. The characterisation is good, which is what readers who took a chance on buying this series deserve, and the last few pages presage a big finale to come. (DK) 7

Flash 219

by Johns & Justiniano + Livesay

<-> Why anyone would want to read a Flash/Wonder Woman team up is beyond me, likewise the villain teaming of Cheetah and Reverse Flash; but that's what they've done here. The hope that it might have something to do with the latest Rogues Gallery outburst was enough to hook me in, but I need not have bothered. It's a routine plot that offers no great insight into the characters concerned. (DK) 3

Gotham Central 27

by Brubaker & Alexander

<+> Catwoman helps Josie figure the truth behind the Reverend Pressman's murder. While the plot is a traditional cocktail of kinky sex and blackmail, Ed Brubaker's script gives it an edge that artist Jason Alexander ignites. His pencil and ink work is superb, finding that mix of beautiful and menacing that eludes so many, his figures bruised but walking on, the hurt showing in every panel, their determination firing through each time. Lee Loughridge's melancholy colours add one more twist, lighting fiercely grim art and transforming some otherwise uneventful surveillance sequences into gripping, just-lit dynamite. Delicious. (IM) 8

Gotham Central 28

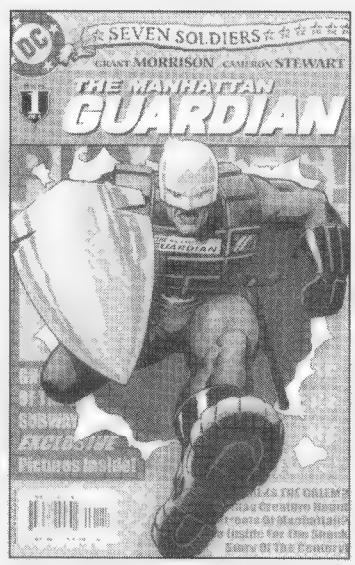
by Rucka & Gaudiano

<-> Officer Kelly rescues two children from a chemical spill in a villain's base and horrifically mutates in the flames, leaving the squad desperate to figure out why – and whose base it is. Greg Rucka, who alternates arcs with *Captain America* writer Ed Brubaker – kicks off his new story with lots of small character details and a freaky climax. Stefano Gaudiano's pencils and inks maximise the terror, amped up further by Lee Loughridge's luminous, then blazing, colours during the chemical spill and subsequent fire, giving a modest plot visual strength. (IM) 7

The Human Race 1

by Raab & Justinlano + Wong

The writing is too densely packed and leans heavily towards the verbose. There are unmistakeable breaks for plot and explanation that stall the narrative progression to the point of irritation. The art and panel layout does much to help the story unfold dramatically, but fails to overcome its weaknesses. (SH) 4



Seven Soldiers: The Manhattan Guardian 1

by Morrison & Stewart

Troubled ex-policeman Jake Jordan is recruited by an enigmatic newspaper mogul as New York's newest crimefighter. Except for obvious improvements in production values and paper stock, this sadly feels like a DC comicbook from around 15 or 20 years ago. Sure, writer Grant Morrison avoids playing it too safe, and perhaps the title is aimed at 11 to 13-year olds... However, whether or not it's the old-fashioned artwork, or the dated character design, or even the story's naivete, the book simply lacks any spark. (JE) 6

A disgraced cop pulls his life back together and takes a corporate superhero job. This seems a bit too conventional to have come from the pen of Morrison, and doesn't have the vitality and imagination that one would expect from this writer. Cameron Stewart's art is great, however. (KG) 7

You may have been forgiven for thinking that Morrison's new series would be dark and grim after the opening one-shot, however this mini shows off his fondness for the daft yet inventive ideas embarrassingly hidden in DC's archives. So the Guardian is updated, becoming a newspaper-sponsored superhero and, aided by the Newsboy Legion, finds himself battling pirate hobos in the subway. High-octane escapist fun, ably illustrated by Stewart. (MAT) 8

Human Target 19

by Milligan & Chaing

<+> Christopher Chance trained Tom McFadden, but he proved too unstable for the psychologically gruelling work. Now he's back and wants to replace Chance. Peter Milligan's final arc explores the themes of identity, how much is innate and how much we create, making this so beguiling, like James Bond wrapped in a psychology degree. Cliff Chiang's work has matured through the series and with Lee Loughridge's superb colours this book has some of the most nuanced and sophisticated art in town. (IM)8

JLA Classified 5

by Giffen + DeMatteis & Maguire + Rubinstein

<++> Guy Gardner returns to become a thorn in the side of the Super Buddies, but Mary Marvel is the star of this issue, not only tired of being pushed around but also determined not to let Guy get the better of her, and boy can she stand up for herself. Power Girl comes into her own as the voice of maturity when Beetle and Booster visit her at JSA HQ. (DK) 7

Seven Soldiers: Shining Knight 1

by Morrison & Bianchi

A young knight from mystical Camelot attempts to overthrow a tyrannical witch but is flung into modern day Los Angles. Unsurprisingly he gets a little more than just culture shock. Another great, albeit magick-laden Grant Morrison script; but the real highlight on the title is Simone Bianchi, whose *Heavy Metal* style of skilful line and design work is a rarity in US comicbooks. (MAT) 8

Sleeper 10

by Brubaker & Phillips; WildStorm

Alarmingly reminiscent of the '70s, where adult themes in comics were an excuse for sex and violence. What you have here is so gratuitous that it endears the reader to none of the characters. It goes on to obscure the plot, pacing and story too. Because there's a damn fine narrative in here but it's just flushed away for the sake of titillation. (SH) 2

Swamp Thing 13

by Dysart & Green II; Vertigo

<-> A strange preacher has made his home in Houma – with Jake's dad his first evangelical victim; Jake is tormented by nightmares of the Swamp Thing. Writer Joshua Dysart makes some interesting parallels between religious conversion and death that will hopefully be developed next issue because they lead nowhere right now. Timothy Green II's inks stomp all over his modest pencilling, leaving pretty mediocre artwork – Jake has shrunk from buff and heroic to a shrimp of a man while Swamp Thing looks more like moulded plastic then vegetation. (IM) 4

<=> Those disturbed by regular Enrique Breccia's Hieronymus Bosch-inspired demons may find relief in guest artist Green

II's more modern style with its clear and highly wrought linework. Dysart takes another tangent in his storyline, highlighting the family of Abigail's new beau Jake, and a sinister travelling Baptist. Although not altogether active in his own title, Dysart uses Swamp Thing's world to tell another chilling horror story. (MAT) 7

The Twilight Experiment 1

by Gray + Palmiotti & Santacruz; Wildstorm Signature Series

Today, Rene discovers she may have healing powers. Ten years earlier, Michael watches news footage of the climactic final battle between his mom, Serenity, and The Righteous, from a space station he's unable to leave for eight years, when his body will be old enough to withstand the sun's ultraviolet rays. Justin Gray and Jimmy Palmiotti's writing establishes a world devastated by battles between heroes and villains, and the civilians caught in between, with an emotional and tender script that avoids ham dramatics. Juan Santacruz's artwork makes good use of shadow and adds much to the early promise of this new series. (IM) 7

Y – The Last Man 30

by Vaughan & Guerra + Marzan Jr

<++> Dr Mann explains why Yorick survived the man-killing plague, and Hero is reunited with her brother. Brian K. Vaughan cutely makes fun of the scientific explanation behind Yorick's fate, simultaneously making it easy for everyone to understand and getting even more jokes out of that simplified version, although I suspect he had the best lines figured from issue 1. Pia Guerra's pencils are fantastic on this anger and frustration filled dialogue, and make even the simplest of scripted scenes stirring and beautiful. Writers and artists alike, read and study, read and study. (IM) 9

Image

The Walking Dead 16

by Kirkman & Adlard + Rathburn

<+> Rick returns and insists they check on Tyreese's fate, while Andrea is in trouble when she learns who killed Rachel and Susie. Just as things started to look up for the battered band of survivors, writer Robert Kirkman expertly twists the knife a little deeper, turning the prison-paradise into another form of Hell. His scripting is as fine as his plotting, with Dale and Andrea's soft conversation as moving as any horror set-piece is chilling. It would be hard for any artist to match the superb writing, but Tony Adlard proves up to the challenge, illustrating disturbing, bloody deaths and still finding humanity in every dark corner. My book of the month. (IM) 9

Marvel

Age of Apocalypse

by various

Marvel celebrates the anniversary of its X-franchise alternate reality crossover by letting a new generation of talent – all heavily influenced by Joe Madureira's anime-style art – illustrate a number of inconsequential tales about events leading up to storyline. Some of the original artists provide pin-ups and Bryan Hitch's tightly wrought pencilling makes for an inappropriate cover, but essentially all this special demonstrates is how far computer colouring has come in 10 years. (MAT) 4

Vimanarama 2

by Morrison & Bond; Vertigo

<=> As the heroes start their campaign to save the world, Ali has trouble getting a word in edgeways. Big concepts, great art, and fun characters make this a wonderful read. All comics should be as fun and vital as this one. Superb. (KG) 9

<=> Although Grant Morrison's latest Vertigo series is a bit more "out-there" than his *Seven Soldiers* event, this is nevertheless another bold attempt to push the boundaries of mainstream US comics. Where else would you find ancient gods hiding under Bradford, the Houses of Parliament destroyed and both Tony Blair and the Queen naked? Far from being merely "wacky", the fevered Scotsman has devised a high-concept action comi-drama in the vein of many "goddess" manga. Handpicked artist Philip Bond's playfully thick linework and comical characters are superbly suited to the tone of the script. (MAT) 7

Alpha Flight 12

by Lobdell & Henry + Morales

<++> Sasquatch and Nemesis can only save Canada by making sense of baffling magical time-travel plots... I leafed through this issue in-store because of the cover, a homage to volume 1 #12, and leapt into a crazy comic tale that only makes the present worse with every trip back trying to fix it. I usually hate time-travel plots, so this gentle parody appealed to me but should still keep admirers of "what ifs" on board. Given that this volume launched with spectacularly awful stories and atrocious art I'm delighted to say it ends with a witty chapter that honours and makes fun of the defining death of Flight history. (IM) 7

Amazing Spider-Man 518

by Straczynski & Deodato + Pimentel

<=> Spidey saves the day, but at a great cost. This story has been terribly dull, with the art seeming uninspired, and J. Michael Straczynski's usually sharp writing lost in a sea of waffle. A resoundingly duff note in an otherwise fun run of stories. (KG) 5

Captain America 4

by Brubaker & Epting + Lark

<=> Cap, distracted by distorted memory flashbacks, walks into an ambush by Crossbones. But Sharon Carter, searching for Jack Monroe, stumbles into bigger trouble. Ed Brubaker is writing Captain America better than anyone in recent memory, with as much intrigue and double-crossing as a superhero *24*, Steve Epting's shadowy SHIELD corridors and blue sky and still desolate Arlington cemetery emphasise the unsettling vibe. Crossbones' temporary change of heart feels implausible but that's a flaw I can overlook when everything else is superb. (IM) 7

Captain America and the Falcon 13

by Priest & Jurgens + Nelson + Pond Scum

<-> Cap confronts Falcon over his recent, more violent actions and risk-taking. Christohper Priest's plot point has been a long time coming but is undermined by overly dramatic hospital scenes that faithful readers know won't remain canon beyond the next issue. The exchange of ideas doesn't flow and feels weighed down by the writer's meaning rather than natural dialogue, but is made more palatable by Dan Jurgens' capable albeit uninspired pencils. (IM) 4

Daredevil 71

by Bendis & Maleev; Marvel Knights

<++> A group of New Yorkers meet to discuss the impact of Daredevil's reign as Kingpin of Hell's Kitchen. Alex Maleev's photo-assisted artwork is stunning when depicting this small group of 'ordinary' people, while the scratchy scenes of Daredevil announcing the new rules are ominously troubling and his fight with Bullet sparse and disturbing in its silence – all amplified through Dave Stewart's creepy, sparse colours. Brian Michael Bendis wins equal praise for a masterly script that maximises a simple plot while thankfully avoiding amping up sentimentality. A frank and powerful tale that ends with a sledgehammer of a cliff-hanger – I want the next issue now! (IM) 8

<=> A reformed drug addict recalls her boyfriend's failed attempt to take over the city as Bendis explores the year Daredevil violently took hold of Hell's Kitchen. Older fans may geek-out with the return of chunky villain Bullet, while Maleev's indebtedness to Bill Sienkiewicz becomes more apparent as he experiments with an inkier brush stroke for the story's flashbacks. (MAT) 8

Daredevil Redemption 2

by Hine & Gaydos; Marvel Knights

From its Bill Sienkiewicz cover to its absorbing storyline, it's refreshing to see Matt Murdoch stop being Daredevil for a while and do his daytime job. If there was ever the template for a second Daredevil movie then it's here in these pages. Conservative panel sequencing and art that concentrates on character rather than effect makes David Hine's story more believable. And, therefore, satisfying. (SHo) 7

<+> Matt Murdoch proves Saul confessed to a murder he didn't commit – but struggles to prove his innocence. Hine's writing is much stronger this issue, despite lacking tension, the characters and dialogue both feeling more real and less like dramatically convenient Southern stereotypes; but Hine is no Bendis, which may go a long way to explaining why Michael Gaydos' artwork is good but incomparable to his superb work on Bendis's *Alias*. Faces and poses are still strong, but Gaydos is clearly working from a lesser script. (IM) 7

District X 11

by Hine & Medina + Sicat; Marvel Knights

<++> Bishop and Ortega enter the tunnels following Winston "Worm" Hobbes, plus the remainder of Melek's underground people. David Hine has introduced too many characters to give readers a connection to them, excepting Ortega, whose family and personal breakdown makes irresistible, car-crash reading, dominating this issue. If the stories were as strong as Ortega's characterisation, this series would deserve a 'must read' tag. The plot has been drawn out but finally excites, although I can do without the premonitions. The art varies from good to great, especially Alejandro Sicat's menacing inks. (IM) 7

Excalibur 10

by Claremont & Lopresti + Adams + Vancata

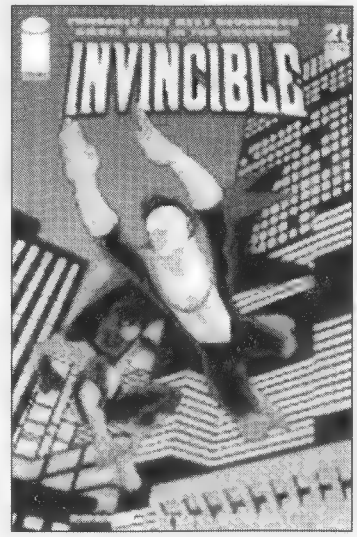
<+++> Wicked, Callisto and Karima search the catacombs for Dark Beast's attacker, leading to a final confrontation with a revolting, not-quite forgotten villain. Chris Claremont astutely writes the inexperience of most of this cast, and the fight is lively and exciting, Callisto already an able combatant with her tentacles and knives, Karima learning more about her Sentinel body. Aaron Lopresti pencils dark tunnel scenes that emphasise the brutality and pain in this fight, but Greg Adams and Brad Vancata's inks

Invincible 21

by Kirkham & Ottley

<+> Another issue without focus, as subplots aplenty bubble along in the background. While writing and art are as strong as ever, there is a disjointed feel as if only half the story is being told. Nonetheless, this is one of the finest superhero comics around. (KG) 8

<=> Invincible investigates Midnight City, where he meets Darkwing, or 'Yet Another Batman Parody Man', as the case may be. No matter: this being a Robert Kirkman book it has enough twists to make Darkwing an interesting adversary in his own right. However, like many recent issues of Invincible, this one leaves you with the feeling there ought to be more to it than foreshadowing events yet to come. (DK) 7



remain too think and inflexible to allow the above-surface scenes to thrive. (IM) 6

Excalibur 11

by Claremont & Lopresti + Adams + Vancata

<-> Courtney Ross – White Queen – plots, looking to buy an island next to Genosha; Archangel and Husk defend Zanzibar's president, the retired hero The Spear, from Weaponeer assassins allied with Viper. Chris Claremont ties this uninspired plot to recent Uncanny X-Men stories without alienating non-readers, while his scripting of Xavier and Magneto, discussing his rescue of Wanda, sparkles. Aaron Lopresti is a capable artist, but his art is cramped by so many panels per page, especially on the action sequences and yet surprisingly graceless on the larger panelled prelude. (IM) 5

Exiles 58

by Bedard & Sakakibara

<-> Tanaraq, controlling Heather Hudson's Sasquatch, challenges the greatest criminal minds to help locate and steal the Timebroker's power – while Beak seeks help to restore Heather. Tony Bedard's plot is simple but intriguing, a change of pace that continues to raise questions about the Timebroker. Mizuki Sakakibara's art is average, rarely shining or unpleasant, except for his Sasquatch/Tanaraq. With a soggy hairy body and spike-gelled face, he's more cuddly "Alf" soft toy than fearsome, threatening beast. (IM) 5

Exiles 59

by Bedard & Sakakibara

<-> Revisiting the world AoA Sabretooth was left on, new mission: to kill their team-mate, Mimic! Blink's telling Mimic what happened while she was off the team for a few issues should be an emotional ride for the reader, but instead is rushed and forced. Apart from that one admittedly crucial scene the plot holds together okay and builds to a freaky ending. Mizuki Sakakibara's art fails to make the brief action scenes vivid but is otherwise competent, but J.C.'s colours are predictable and bland, jolly where they need to be grim. (IM) 5

Exiles 60

by Bedard & Calafiore + McKenna

<++> The Timebroker transports the Exiles to the Age of Apocalypse world, instructing them to stop the X-Men from confronting Sinister and thus incidentally dooming this world; but new Exile Holocaust has other ideas. Tony Bedard's plot leaps excitedly from one big scene to the next with too much exposition for it to flow, but there's a craziness that's been missing from this book for too long, plus apprehensive clues to the Timebroker's origin and motivations. Jim Calafiore pencils an intimidating Holocaust, but the script is focussed on the plot, not on artistic vision, minimising what the artists can do. (IM) 6

Livewires 2

by Warren & Mays + Martin; Marvel Next

<=> Marvel's new glut of "teen-friendly" titles are a lot more knowing than the usual superhero fare, meaning Adam Warren's playful manga-influenced scripting fits right in. After an explosive introduction to the team of undercover mecha assassins and their seemingly innocent newest member, Warren elaborates some more, tying them to other Marvel universe robots, while amusingly undermining the voiceover narrative. The clean linework on Rick Mays' soft rounded characters still jars somewhat, but has a certain charm all of its own. (MAT) 7

New Avengers 4

by Bendis & Finch + Miki

<+> The team starts to track down the perpetrator of the prison break, with mixed results. The characters are superbly written, with every line a joy to read. The artwork is less impressive however, with a number of rudimentary errors spoiling the fun. (KG) 8

<+> The new team confronts jail-breaker Electro and traces his employer to the Savage Land. Brian Michael Bendis marries a slow, detective work plot to a funny, character and history aware script which has several memorable jokes and snappy one-liners. David Finch's art continues to be criminally uneven, and this issue's plot emphasises his weak spots – give Agent Hill Jessica Drew's haircut and you'd never tell Spiderwoman and SHIELD operative apart. Many expressions are exaggerated and lacking in subtlety. An excellent script, good Frank D'Armata colours, but everything else is average – or worse. (IM) 5

<=> The newly formed team gathers to plan its next step in solving the prison outbreak, quickly following leads to the Savage Land. This is surprisingly fast paced for a Bendis script, but still has plenty of his patented natural dialogue – with his eternally comical Spidey a highlight. Finch once again shows his skills (slick, muscular linework) and ineptitudes (indiscernable facial expressions), but generally impresses. (MAT) 7

Marvel Knights 4 #15

by Aguirre-Sacasa & Muniz + Royal + Reber

<+> Reed takes the team into the time-stream to find the missing eight minutes that caused temporal anomalies all over America. Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa writes what has consistently been the best Fantastic Four comic on the racks for the past year, telling tales rooted in Four-history but which feel fresh, funny and exciting, requiring minimal knowledge of what's gone before, while Franklin's softball game simultaneously reminds Chris Claremont how to write supporting scenes, a knack he lost long ago. I'm reminded of the excellent start Mark Waid made to his run on *Fantastic Four*, and just hope Aguirre Sacasa has more staying power. (IM) 8

Mary Jane 1

by McKeever & Miyazawa + Strain

Haven't we been here before with Lois Lane? All the right marketing boxes have been ticked. Spider-Man appears (male readership), relationship issues are to the fore (female readership) and everybody important is young (teenage readership). Worse, the dialogue is cringe-inducing in its attempt to hit the obvious demographic target. And misses. (SH) 2

Mystique 23

by McKeever & Garcia + Fernandez

<-> When Mystique tries to kill Xavier, Wolverine and Rogue are hot on her trial for revenge. The penultimate issue, it reads like writer Sean McKeever pausing for time, the X-Men's involvement an unnecessary distraction from the main plot involving Shortpack's kidnapping; but the scenes with Rogue and Wolverine are handled with aplomb and show yet more creative uses of Mystique's shape-shifting powers. Raul Fernandez's inks are improved, atmospheric and strong without overpowering Manuel Garcia's purposeful pencils, but good as the rambling plot it depicts. (IM) 5

Mystique 24

by McKeever & Garcia + Fernandez

<++> A forgotten ally helps Mystique surprise Steinbeck and reveals his incestuous connection to Shepherd. Sean McKeever wraps up this series and reveals its secrets in a high-octane thriller that's the best this book has been. Penciller Manuel Garcia lets rip too, but a couple of distorted or blank faces mar his contribution; Raul Fernandez's inks clot Mystique's hair again but are otherwise savvy, bold without being oppressive. A great blow-out finale. (IM) 7

Runaways 2

by Vaughan & Alphona + Yeung

<-> It's clever, it's nice to look at, it's referential; it's homage. It also makes me long for a straightforward, classic, superhero team not hell bent on strip mining history. It's fair to say that Runaways would be nothing without past comicbook mythology. And, as themes go, it's getting a) tired and b) lazy. (SH) 2

<-> The Runaways meet Victor, son of an un-named major Marvel villain, destined to destroy the Avengers, just as Excelsior arrives looking for them. Brian K. Vaughan's plot is a collection of comics clichés, but his script is fun with Victor instinctively acting out with his hitherto unknown powers, and the appearance of a minor Astonishing X-Men character is coolly done. Adrian Alphona's pencils are consistent and fine looking, but so many sharply pointed chins and noses don't work for me. Craig Yeung's inks are better this volume and generally subtle, but Chamber's static shock hairstyle looks horribly porcupine. (IM) 7

New Thunderbolts 6

by Nicieza & Grummett + Erskine

<+> Hydra attacks New York, and only the Thunderbolts can save the day. This is good solid superhero fun, but it just doesn't excite as much as it should. The lack of enthusiasm extends to the normally excellent art, which looks a bit tired this month. (KG) 5

Nightcrawler 4

by Aguiree-Sacasa & Robertson + Faucher

<=> Dr Childs releases the 14th demon – but finds controlling him more difficult than he'd bargained for. Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's first arc ends with an anti-climactic thump of a plot that's primarily narrative exposition; but Darick Robertson's pencils feel more certain of their subject now and compensate for the limits of the way the plot has been decanted. Wayne Faucher's inks are particularly measured and illuminating, a refreshing change from the blundering inking that so often blights comics. (IM) 5

Nightcrawler 5

by Aguiree-Sacasa & Robertson + Faucher

<++> Kurt investigates hauntings on the New York subway that are killing the drivers. Writer Roberto Aguiree-Sacasa's second plot is a big improvement on the first arc, and ends with a thrilling scene. Penciller Darick Robertson makes the subway scenes feel very creepy, and also draws an immodestly fit semi-naked Nightcrawler, with Wayne Faucher's warm inks a complimentary force. Much improved. (IM) 7

She-Hulk 12

by Slott & Pelletier + Magyar

<++> Titania, powered by the Champion's Infinity Gem, is physically unbeatable; so while The Avengers, Fantastic Four, Dr Samson and Spider-Man battle her, can She-Hulk and comic store customers figure a different way to win? Dan Slott's plotting is fun and his script manages to be both tense and funny, his depiction of comics obsessives and background puns on continuity hilarious. The art is crisp and clear while the script dazzles. (IM) 8

Spellbinders 1

by Carey & Perkins + Hennessy

Kim starts at a new school after undisclosed trouble at her old one, only to be attacked by an "air elemental" in the schoolyard and discover that half the school are spell-casters. Mike Carey's tale of teenage witches and dissection of high school cliques carries pleasant echoes of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, but promises more. Drew Hennessy's inks caustically throw suspicion on everyone's motives, but are weakened by Guru eFX's occasionally striking but too often unimaginative colour palette. Mike Perkins' pencils have more flair and wit and don't over-egg the monstrous, combining well with Hennessy's ominous inks. Derivative, sure, but promising. This could be the next sleeper hit. (IM) 7

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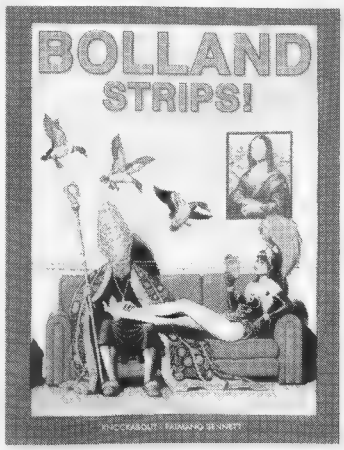

Bolland Strips

by Bolland; Knockabout

Brian Bolland's comics career dates back to work not readily associated with the artist best known for Judge Dredd and Batman. His humour and whimsy strips together with his saucy stories are collected here in a beautifully printed hardback published by Knockabout's Tony Bennett and Gosh's John Palmano.

The beauty of seeing a collection of an artist's work, as opposed to a single story, is that you are able to appreciate the diversity of styles and far better assess the artist's position. Bolland, here, proves himself worthy successor to the undisputed king of linework, the late Ron Embleton. That Bolland's eyesight is said to be fading, resulting in his reliance on hugely enlarged computer images to ink on screen, has no noticeable effect on the end product. In itself a testament to the painstaking attention to detail he has always been known for.

At £12.99 for a large format – 10x8.5" – 116 page hardback, this is one of those great books you can happily dip into numerous times. Highly recommended. (TM) 9

US Indies

Ojo 5

by Kieth & Wisnia; Oni Press

<=> Sam Kieth concludes the story of the traumatised youngster Annie, as she finally faces up to her bullying older sister, releases her bizarre octopus-type pet, Ojo, and comes to terms with the death of her mother. Decidedly looser than usual, Sam Kieth's exaggerated sketched lines captures her warped imagination throughout this touching little story. (MAT) 7

The Shaolin Cowboy 2

by Darrow; Burlyman Press

<=> More eye-popingly visceral action from Geof Darrow, as the adventures of his podgy kung-fu master take a decidedly surreal turn with a brutal confrontation with a begrudging crab. Seemingly resigned to the fact that his artwork is little more than eye candy, Geof Darrow plays the story for laughs. You'll pause to browse over his exquisitely detailed panels as much as you'll chuckle at the comical premise of the story. (MAT) 7

The Simpsons Futurama Crossover Crisis II #2

by various; Bongo Entertainment

<-> After the build-up that brought every character from fiction into the world of Futurama through a wormhole at the public library, this becomes a wasted opportunity when all they can think about doing is fighting with the Bongo Comics characters. This has none of the wit of last issue, which is a great pity. (DK) 5

UK Newsstand

Doctor Who Magazine 355

by various; Panini UK

Hot on the heels of the new TV show, the first comic strip appearance of the Ninth Doctor and Rose and the team of Gareth Roberts, Mike Collins and David Roach does a good job of capturing the spirit of its TV counterpart, particularly its frenetic pace. Although the likenesses need some work, the visuals nevertheless match the energy of the script. Promising. (KM) 7

Judge Dredd The Megazine 230

by various; Rebellion

<=> The Megazine maintains a level of quality, with *Judge Dredd*, *Anderson Psi*, *The Bogie Man* anchoring the title, and a good mix of new and reprint strips making up the balance. There's ultra-violence in Japan in the final part of the *Shimura* tale *Deus X*, not to mention the sexiness that comes across in Andy Clarke's much-admired artwork. Simon Coleby's art and Chris Blythe's colouring look great on *Bato Loco*. (DK) 7

Marvel Rampage 6

by various; Panini UK

After extricating the comic from its excessive packing, I was pleasantly surprised to find Staz Johnson's art on the lead Avengers strip. His Hitch-esque approach complements Ferg Handley's script, resulting in a story that wouldn't seem out of place in a US anthology. The Spider-Man/Mr Hyde back-up strip is equally well written. (KM) 7

Spectacular Spider-Man 114

by various; Panini UK

The Red Skull is altering reality by using the Cosmic Cube, and only Spidey and Captain Britain can stop him. Visually, Jon Haward and John Stokes' CB emulates the classic Alan Davis 1980s look. Unsurprisingly, given the younger target readership, the story is perhaps closer to the generic, original 1970s stories. A fair story, and great to see Stokes tight inking again. (KM) 5

2000 AD Progs 1928-1431

by various; Rebellion

<=> Gordon Rennie and Ian Gibson keep *Judge Dredd* entertaining; and the bonkers retro fun that is *Second City Blues*, by Kek-W and Warren Pleece, reaches its conclusion. *Tiger Sun Dragon Moon*, by Steve Parkhouse, brings oriental mysticism and swordplay to 2000AD. *Sinister Dexter* sits with the motor idling for three issues, but could be worse. *Nikolai Dane* returns to form with an all too brief appearance by Dante's sister Lulu. (DK) 7

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MAGE K.: MINIONS CASE [48] (48/4) - 12 % !..... 204 €
MAGE KNIGHT: SORCERY [12 BOOSTERS] (-/4)..... 89 €
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MAGIC: 7TH BOOSTER [T. CHINESE] (36/-) 67 €

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MAGIC: 7TH THEME DECK (15/40)..... 55 €
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MAGIC: CHAMPIONS OF KAMIGAWA BOOSTER (36/15)..... 108 €
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MAGIC: SCOURGE THEME DECKS (12/61)..... 110 €
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Comics Economics

Top 100 US comicbook sales for January 2005

New Avengers still at #1

Rank	Prior	Title, issue, Price & Estimated Orders	Publisher
1	(=)	**New Avengers #2** $2.25 (153,751)	Marvel
2	(=)	**The Ultimates Volume 2 #2** $2.99 (113,379)	Marvel
3	(N)	**X-Men: Phoenix – Endsong #1** $2.99 (108,466)	Marvel
4	(9)	**Ultimate X-Men #54** $2.25 (90,619)	Marvel
5	(4)	**Ultimate X-Men #55** $2.25 (87,447)	Marvel
6	(9)	**Uncanny X-Men #454** $2.25 (87,411)	Marvel
7	(11)	**X-Men #166** $2.25 (85,934)	Marvel
8	(10)	**Ultimate Spider-Man #71** $2.25 (83,987)	Marvel
9	(12)	**Amazing Spider-Man #516** $2.25 (79,842)	Marvel
10	(13)	**Wolverine #24** $2.25 (79,831)	Marvel

Phoenix End Song in at #2

11	(17)	**Wolverine: the End #6** $2.99 (74,730)	Marvel
12	(14)	**Ultimate Fantastic Four #15** $2.25 (74,501)	Marvel
13	(N)	**X-23 #1** $2.99 (68,339)	Marvel
14	(21)	**Teen Titans #20** $2.50 (65,953)	DC Comics
15	(20)	**JLA #110** $2.25 (64,094)	DC Comics
16	(19)	**Marvel Knights Spider-Man #10** $2.99 (61,831)	Marvel
17	(16)	**X-Men/Fantastic Four #2** $3.50 (60,465)	Marvel
18	(18)	**JLA: Classified #3** $2.95 (60,225)	DC Comics
■		**International direct market retail orders estimated below 60,000**	
19	(22)	**Batman #636** $2.25 (58,630)	DC Comics
20	(13)	**X-23 #2** $2.99 (56,367)	Marvel
21	(22)	**Captain America #2** $2.99 (53,306)	Marvel
■		**International direct market retail orders estimated below 50,000**	
22	(36)	**Flash #217** $2.25 (49,771)	DC Comics
23	(28)	**Spectacular Spider-Man #23** $2.25 (48,874)	Marvel
24	(26)	**Daredevil #69** $2.99 (45,727)	Marvel
25	(23)	**Spectacular Spider-Man #24** $2.25 (47,824)	Marvel
26	(41)	**Incredible Hulk #77** $2.99 (47,180)	Marvel
27	(=)	**Fantastic Four #522** $2.99 (46,335)	Marvel
28	(29)	**JSA #69** $2.50 (43,650)	DC Comics
29	(41)	**Wanted #6** $2.99 (43,845)	Image
30	(25)	**Legion of Super Heroes #2** $2.95 (42,261)	DC Comics
31	(22)	**Flash #218** $2.25 (41,668)	DC Comics
32	(31)	**Detective Comics #802** $2.95 (40,842)	DC Comics
33	(30)	**New X-Men #8** $2.99 (40,179)	Marvel
■		**International direct market retail orders estimated below 40,000**	
34	(36)	**Outsiders #19** $2.50 (39,528)	DC Comics
35	(37)	**The Punisher #16** $2.99 (39,341)	Marvel
36	(33)	**Conan #12** $2.99 (39,311)	Dark Horse
37	(49)	**Adventures of Superman #636** $2.50 (39,253)	DC Comics
38	(30)	**New X-Men #9** $2.99 (38,187)	Marvel
39	(38)	**Nightwing #101** $2.25 (38,095)	DC Comics
40	(39)	**Action Comics #823** $2.50 (36,638)	DC Comics
41	(39)	**Nightwing #102** $2.25 (36,093)	DC Comics
42	(56)	**Army of Darkness: Ashes 2 Ashes #4** $2.99 (36,052)	DevilsDue
43	(N)	**Army of Darkness: Shop Til You Drop Dead #1** $2.99 (35,325)	DevilsDue
44	(55)	**Soulfire #3** $2.99 (35,325)	Aspen
45	(43)	**Pulse #7** $2.99 (34,779)	Marvel
46	(45)	**Batman Gotham Knights #61** $2.50 (33,073)	DC Comics
47	(=)	**Robin #134** $2.25 (32,650)	DC Comics
48	(43)	**Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes #5** $3.50 (32,768)	Marvel
49	(65)	**Green Arrow #46** $2.50 (32,469)	DC Comics
50	(62)	**Space Ghost #3** $2.95 (32,194)	DC Comics
51	(53)	**Exiles #58** $2.99 (32,129)	Marvel
52	(46)	**Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes #6** $3.50 (32,006)	Marvel
53	(56)	**New Thunderbolts #4** $2.99 (31,725)	Marvel
54	(N)	**Darkness Superman #1** $2.99 (31,643)	Image
55	(N)	**Stormbreaker: Saga of Beta Ray Bill #1** $2.99 (31,297)	Marvel
56	(57)	**Marvel Knights 4 #14** $2.99 (31,291)	Marvel
57	(54)	**Justice League Elite #7** $2.50 (31,215)	DC Comics
58	(61)	**Planetary #22** $2.95 (31,068)	DC Comics
59	(N)	**Spider-Man/Human Torch #1** $2.99 (30,617)	Marvel
60	(N)	**Fantastic Four Foes #1** $2.99 (30,329)	Marvel
■		**International direct market retail orders estimated below 30,000**	
61	(N)	**Arana: Heart of the Spider #1** $2.99 (29,843)	Marvel
62	(69)	**Birds of Prey #78** $2.50 (29,456)	DC Comics
63	(68)	**Powers #8** $2.95 (29,438)	Marvel
64	(63)	**Batgirl #60** $2.50 (29,227)	DC Comics
65	(75)	**Spawn #142** $2.50 (28,705)	Image
66	(77)	**Marvel Team-Up #4** $2.25 (27,216)	Marvel
67	(79)	**Batman Legends of the Dark Knight #187** $2.50 (26,853)	DC Comics
68	(81)	**We 3 #3** $2.95 (26,600)	DC Comics
69	(76)	**Nightcrawler #5** $2.99 (26,442)	Marvel
70	(N)	**Majestic #1** $2.95 (26,149)	DC Comics
71	(80)	**Cable/Deadpool #11** $2.99 (25,844)	Marvel
72	(82)	**Y: The Last Man #30** $2.95 (25,744)	DC Comics
73	(86)	**Wonder Woman #212** $2.25 (25,810)	DC Comics
74	(N)	**Superman Strength #1** $5.95 (24,906)	DC Comics
75	(81)	**Rogue #7** $2.99 (24,865)	Marvel
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Baffle us with comics questions, or save us with answers!

TV21 revisited?

Peter Sidebotham
Congleton, Cheshire

ANY hints that more **TV21** colour strips are to be printed, as started (and not finished) by Carlton?

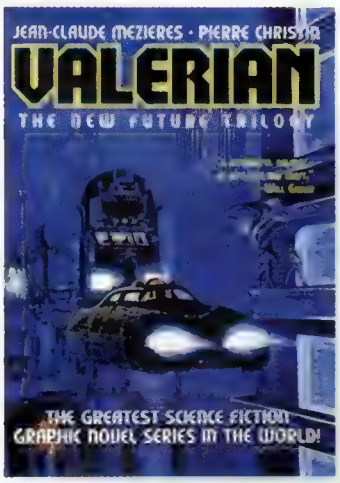
Dez replies: No. Nada, Peter.

Valerian Collection?

Tim Elliott via e-mail:
tim.elliott@ukaea.org.uk

DID iBooks ever publish the 176 page Valerian collection?

Yup. In December last year, priced $17.95. The ISBN is 0743486749 and here's the cover...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Miracleman update?

Tony Ingram
3 Lower Harlings
Shotley Gate, Ipswich IP9 1QE

HAS there been any more news on the Marvelman/Miracleman front recently? I ask only because, recalling the rumours that Marvel was showing an interest in the disputed has-been hero, I was rather surprised, when reading the recent **Official Marvel Handbook of the Golden Age**, to read – in the 'other aliases' section in the entry for minor mystic Doctor Druid – the name Guntag Bargholm!

As I recall, this was the name of the guy who turned Micky Moran into Marvelman in the 1950s stories from Miller & So Ltd.

Coincidence? Or has Marvel decided to assume the original Marvelman is now out of copyright and up for grabs?

Coincidence? Oh, sure. I mean, there aren't many names as common as Guntag Borghelm (or Barghelm, as they're spelling it). But let's not jump to conclusions simply because there's an MM fan working on the book.

Orson Welles?

Christine Harper via e-mail

FOR the sake of ultra-marginal interest coverage, can anyone list the comics that reference/feature famed illusionist Orson Welles?

A big comics fan (witness his many screen shots inspired by Will Eisner), Welles almost got to direct his very own Batman movie. But in comics, I can only tell you about my favourite, although Paul Gambaccini beat me to the punch buying it at a comic mart...

*Reprinted from **Superman** #62 (Jan, 1950) in **Superman: From the 30s to the 70s**, it tells of Superman and Welles defeating a Martian invasion.*

Having unwittingly walked into an unmanned rocket ship just before its launch to Mars (like you do), Welles thinks, "When I fooled the world with my Martian invasion broadcast, I never dreamed I would invade Mars myself!"

But he does, and just in time to foil the little green men who turned out to be big fans of Hitler, having followed his career through super-telescopes, and were planning their own blitzkrieg, of Earth. Naturally, he calls on Kal-El to help, broadcasting his SOS from Mars.

Here's the original comic's cover...

Space Junkk?

David Wiggins via e-mail:
david.wiggins@h2h.newham.net

DOES anyone know how many issues of Visual Imagination's **Space Junkk** were published in the early 1990s?

I'm planning to write a short piece on the comic for Tony Ingram's **Comics Retrospective**.

*Created by Nicholas Briggs in 1990, **Space Junkk** managed only four issues before living up to its name.*

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OPENS MIDDAY

Letters

CI, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (editorial@comicsinternational.com)

LAST month I tempted fate by commenting here how our sales have been on the increase lately. Whether it's down to our coverage of the latest spate of comics movies or simply the general upturn in the industry, it hasn't let up! This month, thanks to extra orders and new retailers, we've had to bump up our print run by a massive 16.5%, making it the highest since #136, August, 2001.

With our regular Spring push looming and new features coming up soon, things are certainly looking rosie. And, of course, being a showcase for the entire industry, any new readers for us means potential new readers for everybody else.

*One such new feature is a 12-month comic strip serial from Paul Grist, starring characters from his highly topical Image series, the Brit-hero universe of **Jack Staff**. That starts next month, as we squeeze five extra pages into our flatplan. It's weird, but even after 15 years, I'm still having a whale of a time with this magazine!* ... Dez Skinn/editor

Jerry Cornelius

Michael Moorcock via e-mail

THANKS for the recent article [**CI** #183] on Jerry Cornelius. Only one thing that's really not true and that is I never asked Mobius to take Jerry's name off his strip.

Somehow he got word (not from me) that I wasn't happy with his use of the name and removed it himself. When I saw him later, I made it clear to him that I was perfectly happy for him to use the character's name. However, I do like to be kept in the picture when Jerry is being used and tend to think kindly of those who contact me about him and unkindly about those who don't...

Jerry also appeared, of course, in the **Multiverse** comic I did for DC as well as having his own strip in **IT** drawn by Mal Dean and R. Glyn Jones and written by me and M. John Harrison, reprinted in **The New Nature of the Catastrophe**!

Happy Days

Piers via e-mail: piers@casimir-mrowczynski.fsnet.co.uk

I LOVED Don Barr's letter [**CI** #183] about his summer of '69 holidays and his happy memories of those times.

Like for many of a particular age, I think nostalgia is a wonderful thing. But maybe it's also that what was produced at the time was actually pretty good.

Spinner racks, full of the latest DC imports, with those lovely T&P stamps on the covers, sweets at four for a penny, and great issues of **Cor!!**, **Buster**, **Dandy**, **Beano**, **Whizzer and Chips**, **Shiver 'n' Shake**, to name but a few, occasional comic free gifts, and those fantastic Summer Specials.

And on the telly, *Catweazle*, *Doctor Who* and *Banana Splits*. All great stuff! Happy days!

Getting the indie spirit

Paul Dale Roberts via e-mail: JazmaPika@cs.com

I GOT my grubby little paws on **Comics International** #181 and was pleased to read the write-up on how black film director Reggie Hudlin will take on Marvel's Black Panther.

It's hard to believe the Black Panther has been around 40 years! When Reggie is through with revamping the Black Panther, I believe the character will finally receive that A-list hero status. Look at Blade – he was a minor character but now, after the three movies, he's a recognised famous vampire killer/hero.

I was also glad to hear that Dynamite Entertainment is bringing back that flaming redhead warrior known as Red Sonja. Robert E. Howard's characters – from King Kull to Red Sonja to Conan – have lived on in various books by other authors and, of course, in comicbooks.

Movie, cartoon, novel and TV franchises from The Hardy Boys by Z Papercut to Star Wars to Star Trek to **Army of Darkness** by DDP, **Battle of the Planets** by Top Cow, **24 Stories** by IDW live on through comicbooks. What I don't understand is why some comicbook creator doesn't take on the reins of J.R.R. Tolkien's **The Hobbit** and have continuing new stories in comicbooks? Is it because comicbook creators can't obtain the rights to this classic?

On another note, I once published a one-shot independent comicbook called **The Legendary Dark Silhouette**. Of course, I didn't make a million dollars from it, but it was a dream come true to get it published.

I now have two comics-reading cousins who are involved in their own comicbook works. My cousin Landon Gerard contributes to the pencilling of Damage Comics' **Bloodshed** and **Ashes**. **Ashes** is

Jerry Cornelius

Guy Lawley via e-mail

I AM chuffed to see that a new comic (**Midnight Kiss**) featuring my favourite English assassin, Jerry Cornelius, is to appear later this year [**CI**#183, page 12].

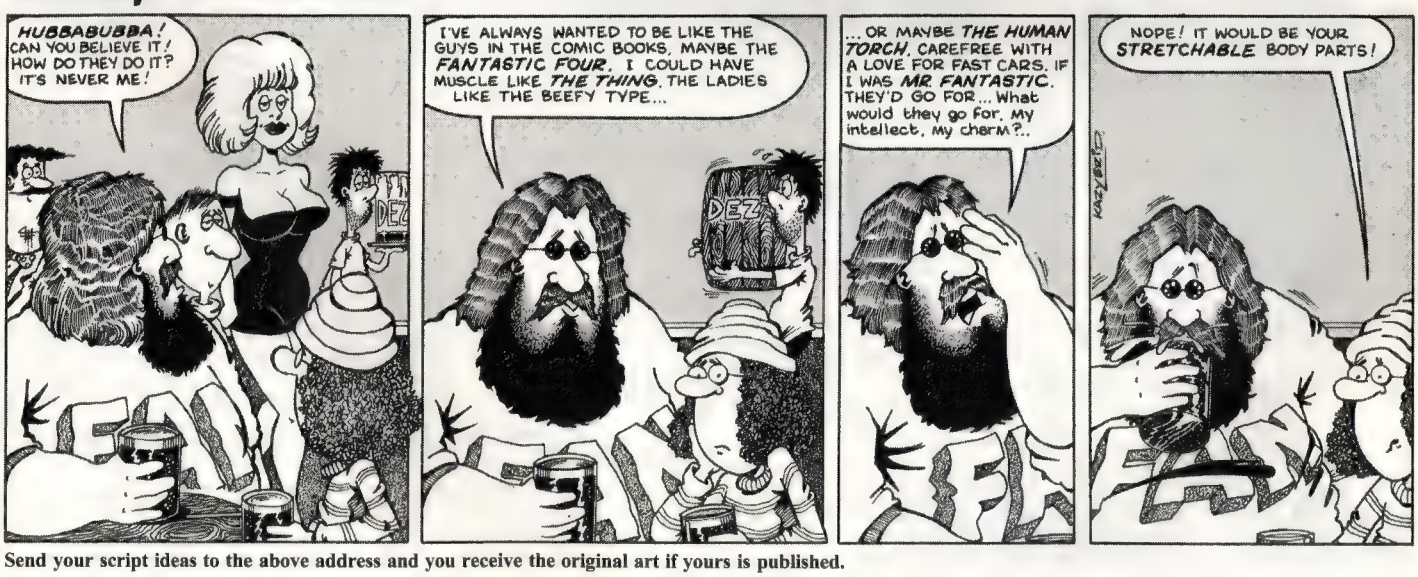
In this news item you point out that Jerry is to be a recurring character in a story also featuring the writer's own heroes, with the permission of Cornelius creator Michael Moorcock.

I'm writing to remind you, and hopefully your readers, that this has been done before, in Trident Comics' 1989 series, **The Saga of the Man Elf**. Jerry and many of his own supporting cast were heavily featured in this series alongside its own title character.

Like the entire Trident line the comic was a resounding flop, although Moorcock was kind enough to praise the **Man Elf** writer's handling of his characters.

For Cornelius completists, copies can still be found in the 50p comic mart boxes from time to time, or struggling to achieve their 99p starting bid on eBay.

Mike Kazybrid's COMIC CUTS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I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE LIKE THE GUYS IN THE COMIC BOOKS. MAYBE THE FANTASTIC FOUR. I COULD HAVE MUSCLE LIKE THE THING. THE LADIES LIKE THE BEEFY TYPE...
...OR MAYBE THE HUMAN TORCH. CAREFREE WITH A LOVE FOR FAST CARS. IF I WAS MR. FANTASTIC. THEY'D GO FOR... What would they go for. My intellect. My charm?..
NOPE! IT WOULD BE YOUR STRETCHABLE BODY PARTS!
DEZ
KAZYBRID

Send your script ideas to the above address and you receive the original art if yours is published.

Please note: All scripts are submitted on the understanding they become the copyright property of Kazybrid, Skinn and Comics International.

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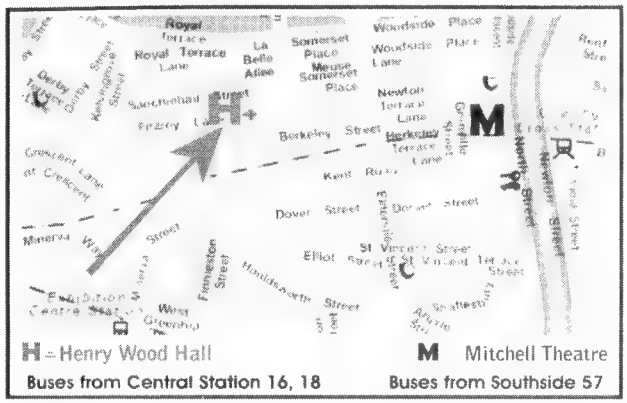

Enquiries 0141 630 0049 or marts@redhotcomics.demon.co.uk
Future dates to be announced

their newest book and if you like reading about vampires, this might be the comic for you. My other cousin, Bret Michael Hodson, is coming out with his first indie comic, **Romance and Coffee**, which is a semi-biographical story of his life and the people that come and go. I wish Bret the best of luck on his project and Damage Comics has already gained a nice cult following.

I hate reality TV shows and whenever I switch on, it seems like there is another one starting. Thank goodness for comics! There is always a good variety out there to satisfy my craving of various genres – from romance to comedy to science fiction to fantasy to horror – and this week I went to A1 Comics and found **The Grimoire** #1 by Speakeasy Comics, Stan Lee's **Alexa**, **Street Angel** #5 by SLG, **Terra Obscura** volume 2 #6 from America's Best Comics, **Vimanarama** from Vertigo, Rob Oder's **Tabloia, Flare** from Heroic Publishing, Jim Starlin's **Cosmic Guard**, **Containment** from IDW, **Angel Stomp Future** #1 by Warren Ellis, Joe R. Lansdale's **By Bizarre Hands**, **Breakdown and Infantry** #3 by DDP!

Not only does the comics reader have plenty to select from, but a lot of these comics are good fodder for a movie script.

I can't believe how many comic-book movies are out there or getting ready to be shown. I just saw **Constantine** and **Elektra** and was thrilled with both of them. Now I am anxiously awaiting Frank Miller's **Sin City**, starring Bruce Willis!

It can't get any better than this!

Beat those panels!

Paul Gravett via e-mail:
paul.gravett@btopenworld.com

RE: **CI** #183, *Panel Beaters* on Ron Embleton's Johnny Frog strip from **The Eagle**.

This is a lovely idea, showing comic art the original size – bravo!

Graphic novels

Robert Corley
Atomic Diner/Sub-City Comics
2 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

I READ and had to agree with the *Sez Dez* column in **CI** #183 on the growth of the grapic novel. I only have to look at my own stores to see this in action!

We are at the stage now where on some titles we order more of the graphic than we do of the ongoing title and that's only the initial order.

So, yes, they are definitely the way of the future, which is great because they appeal to a much broader audience than single issues.

Rob, quite naturally, is currently gathering his first six issues of Atomic Diner into a trade paperback.

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Kyle Baker ..... www.kylebaker.com
Leo Baxendale ..... www.reaper.co.uk/main.htm
Brian Bolland Art ..... www.velouria.com/Bolland
Mark Bright ..... www.mdbright.com
Eddie Campbell ..... www.eddiecampbellcomics.com
John Cassaday ..... www.johncassaday.com
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Key to the abbreviations used:

imp = air imported new issues
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gn = graphic novels
tpbk = trade paperbacks
STO = standing order service (new comics reserved)
s-p = small press and fanzines
ind = independent comics
u/g = underground comix
prl = peripherals/supplies
RPG = role playing games
CCG = customisable card games
merch = trading cards, videos, t-shirts, posters, etc

Sorry, no websites, this is a shop guide

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Book & Comic Exchange, 14 Pembridge Road, Notting Hill Gate, London W11. Mon-Sun 10-8. Nothing legal refused! (back, ind, u/g) 020 7229 8420

Comic Showcase 63 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0NE. Sun-Wed 10-7; Thurs-Fri 10-8; Sat 9.30-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, cartoon books, original art) 020 7434 4349

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Calamity Comics, 160 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2HR. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs-Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 020 8427 3831

NEW **Cosmic Legacy**, 7 Shrubbery Road, Streatham, London SW16 2AS. Mon-Sat 10-6; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, ind, merch) 020 8696 9428

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Krypton Komics, 252 High Road, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (next to Tesco) Tues-Wed 11-6; Thurs 10.30-7; Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 Nearest Tube: Seven Sisters Road. (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind) 020 8801 5378 fax: 8376 3174

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Forbidden Planet, 44 The Priory Centre, Dartford, Kent DA1 2HS. Mon-Wed 10.30-5.30; Thurs-Sat 10-5.30 (back, gn, ind, PRG, CCG, merch) 01322 224837

Incognito Comic Shop, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV) tel/fax: 01227 785898

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton LU1 2TP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, STO, s-p, CCG, merch, Star Trek/Wars, sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Planet Ace, 324-325 Chartwell North, Top Floor, Victoria Plaza, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5SR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 01702 613021

Slough Computers, 50 Village Shopping Centre, Slough, Berks SL1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, STO, ind, cards, second hand video games) 01753 521594

Time Trek, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1EG. Mon-Wed/Fri 9.30-5.30; Thurs 10-8; Sat 10-5.30; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, CCG, prl, sf TV/film) 020 8313 0677

Whatever Comics, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, kits) 01227 453226

Whatever Comics, 5 Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, model kits) 01622 681041

Midlands

Abstract Sprocket, 29 St Benedicts Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 4PF. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01603 624410

Close Encounters, 59 Midland Road, Bedford MK10 1PW. Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 9-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, gn, merch, video, DVDs, action figures, t-shirts, trading cards) 01234 270777

Comic Culture, The Mall, 257-259 High Street, Lincoln LN2 1HX. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, RPG, CCG, prl) 01522 546611

Forbidden Planet, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF. Mon-Wed 9.30-6; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV) 02476 229672

Forbidden Planet Superstore, 38 Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 7LA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs-Fri to 6) (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, books, games, mags, kits, toys, videos) 0121 236 3026

FPI Derby, 1/2 The Corn Exchange, Albert Street, Derby DE1 2DS. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, merch, rock/film TV memorabilia, video games) 01332 206606

FPI Hanley, 52 Stafford Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1JB. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, "alchemy metalware) 01782 279294 fax: 202381

FPI Leicester, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0116 2515266

FPI Nottingham, 19-23 Friar Lane, Nottingham NG1 6DA. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 0115 9484122

FPI Wolverhampton, 23 Victoria Street, Wolverhampton WV1 3NP. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01902 717440

Ground Zero, 9 Toothill Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1NJ. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, prl, CCG, merch, toys) 01623 622017

Nostalgia & Comics (FPI), 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon-Thurs 9.15-5.45; Fri-Sat 9.15-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0121 643 0143

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY. Mon-Sat 9-6. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, manga) 0115 950 8045

Phoenix Comix, 29 Abington Square, Northampton NN1 4AE. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, RPG, CCG, action figures) 01604 602311

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 6 East Street, Derby DE1. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, fantasy books, film/TV) 0115 950 9231

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 16 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, miniatures) 0115 950 9231

North West

All-American, 102 Newport Street, Bolton BL3 6AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Star Wars, WWF, action figures, S/Age, videos, records, CDs) 01204 366553

Alpha Omega Comics, 33-35 Library Street, Wigan, Lancs WN1 1NN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, merch, videos) 07796 854644

Batcave, 39 Penny Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 6HQ. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, RPG, CCG, merch) 01254 667488

Forbidden Planet, 92 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, sci-fi horror) 0151 707 1491

Forbidden Planet Megastore (FPI), 65 Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (two floors; imp, back, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, books, toys, film and TV tie-ins, manga) 0161 839 4777

Imagination Station, 41 Bank Street, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8HJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch)

Millennium Comics, 4 Church Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5NT. Mon-Tues 10-5; Thurs-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01606 49255

Thunderbooks, 332 Lytham Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 1DW. Mon/Tues/Thurs-Sat (Sundays in June-Oct only) 10-5.30; Wed 1-3.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, media collectors' items) 01253 348321 fax: 407813

Thunderbooks II, 116 Friargate, Preston, Lancashire PR1 9EE. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01772 204287

Time Tunnel, 13 Earle Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 2BS. Mon and Wed-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, merch, film/TV memorabilia, action figures, videos, model kits) 01270 215496

NEW **Travelling Man**, 4 Dale Street, Manchester M1 1JW. (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, prl) 0161 237 1877

Worlds Apart (FPI), 58-60 Lime Street (city centre), Liverpool. Mon-Sat 10-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film) 0151 707 0839

North East

Books 'N' Comics, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, fantasy and film magazines, Doctor Who/Star Trek) 01642 249143

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 30 Eastgate, The Headrow, Leeds LS2 7JL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, film/TV mags, posters, toys, kits, trading cards, stills, Star Trek/Doctor Who) 0113 242 6325

Forbidden Planet, 59 Grainger Street, Newcastle NE1 5JE. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, fantasy/sci-fi books, videos) 0191 261 9173

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 41 Dundas Street, Middlesbrough TS1 1HR. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, gn, s-p, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, video, action figures, film/TV, manga) 01642 248889

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Matilda Street, off the Moor, Sheffield S1 4QD. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; Wed-Fri 10-6; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, model kits, sci-fi/fantasy books, horror magazines, newspaper strip books) 0114 276 9475

The Last Picture Show, 38-39 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thurs 10-8; Fri 10-9; Sat 9-7, Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV and rock memorabilia) 0114 256 9604 fax: 255 3399

Millennium Comics, Stall 141, Warrington Indoor Market. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01925 575657

Off-World Comics, 200 Park View, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE26 3QP. Mon-Tues/Thurs 10-5.30 (closed Wed); Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch) 0191 251 2288

OK Comics, 19 Thorntons Arcade, Briggate, Leeds LS1 6LQ. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl) 0113 246 9366

Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield. Mon-Tues/Thurs-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, Star Trek specialists) 0114 275 8905

Travelling Man, Unit 8/9, The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7BR. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 0113 242 7227

NEW **Travelling Man**, 43 Grainger Street, Newcastle-

Upon-Tyne NE1 5JE. (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, prl) 0191 261 4993

Travelling Man, 54 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 01904 628787

2Tone Comics, 40 Market Street, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 6AA. Thurs-Sun 10.30-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, merch, CGC) 01422 845666

West Country

American Dream Comics, 72 Walcot Street, Bath BA1 5BD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, hobby kits, CDs) 01225 424881

American Graffiti, 78 Church Lane, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1BH. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01271 325740

Area 51, 143 Gloucester Road, Bristol. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, original art) 0117 924 4655

Automattic Comics, Unit 2, 17 Pickwick Road, Corsham SN13 9BQ. Mon-Tues 12-5; Thurs-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01249 701647

Collector's Choice, 45 Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1TX. Mon-Sat 9-5 (S/Age, British comics/annuals, vintage mags, toys, memorabilia) 01452 410232

Forbidden Planet, 30 Penn Street, Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, subculture) 0117 929 8692

Forbidden Planet, 43-45 East Street, Southampton SO14 3HN. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-6; Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 023 80230991 fax: 230996

Ian's Books & Comics, 195a Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO4 0JP (next to Tesco). Mon-Tues/Thurs-Fri 10.30-5.15 (Wed closed); Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, prl, toys) 023 92422731

Kathies Comics, Unit BG29, Broadmead Gallery, The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol BS1 3XB. Mon-Wed/Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Thurs 9-6; Sun 11-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0117 922 1170

Kathies Comics, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 01752 257800

Paradox Comics, 17 High Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1AB. Mon-Fri 10.30-5; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, merch, videos) 01202 661346

NEW **Travelling Man**, 8 Park Street, Bristol BS1 5NF. (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, prl) 0117 925 8833

Wales

Cardiff's Comic Guru Presents!, 20-22 Wyndham Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1FJ. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-9; Fri-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 029 202 29119

Cardiff Fantasy Centre, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sat 9.30-4.30 (imp, back, STO; established over 20 years) 029 206 58184 (evenings)

Comix Shoppe, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, anime, Games Workshop) 01792 642097

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5 Duke Street, Cardiff. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri 10-5.30; Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, sci-fi fantasy/horror books, Star Trek/Wars) 029 202 28885

Negative Zone, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind; established for 12 years) 01633 222159

Scotland

Asylum Books & Games, 29 Adelphi, Aberdeen AB11 5B2. Mon 10-8; Tues-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-8; Fri-Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, new/second hand RPG, CCG, books, original art) 01224 574637

Black Hole Comic Shop, Unit 3, 5 Victoria Road, Dundee DD1 1ER. Mon-Thurs 10-5; Fri-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, second hand records, CDs, videos) 01382 221037

City Centre Comics, 51 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5LU. Tues-Sat 10-5 (back) 0141 552 2208

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Schoolhill, Aberdeen AB10 1JX. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-7; Fri 10-6; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 01224 622131

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 40-41 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1LL. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5. (imp, STO, s-p, ind, merch, foreign) 0131 558 8226

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 168 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0141 331 1215

Justice Comics, Unit 36, The Arcade, Stirling FK8 1AX. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 01786 447687

Plan 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB25 1NE. Mon-Wed 10-5; Thurs 10-6; Fri-Sat 10-5; Sun 1-4. (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, WWF, merch, sci-fi) tel/fax: 01224 624467

Red Hot Comics, Block D Unit 7, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH. Mon-Sat 11.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0141 630 0049

Northern Ireland

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 52-54 Ann Street, Belfast BT1 4EG Mon-Wed 9-5.30; Thurs 9-8.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 1-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 028 90438744

Planet Ace Derry, 33 Shipquat Street, Derry, Londonderry BT48 6DF. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 02871 369787

Retail Index: USA

When telephoning from outside the USA, include the bracketed 00. Out-of-town US calls begin with the 1 prefix only. The following is a fraction of the estimated 3,000+ US comics stores.

Alabama

Optic Nerve, 1930 12th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205 (film, newsstand, ind) (00)1 205 933 2787

Alaska

Bosco's in Spenard, 2606 Spenard Road, Anchorage 99503. Mon-Sat 11-8, Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, merch) (00) 1 907 274 4112

Bosco's Diamond Centre, 800 East Diamond Boulevard, Anchorage 99577. Mon-Fri 10-9; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, games, Star Wars/Trek) (00) 1 907 344 3963

Bosco's in Eagle River, 11432 Business Boulevard, Eagle River. Mon-Sat 12-8, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, merch) (00) 1 907 696 5166

Arizona

Lost Dutchman, 747 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85013. Mon-Sun 10-7. (new, back) (00)1 619 278 0371

California

Comickaze, 5525 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 62117-2342. Mon-Fri 11-7; Sat 11-6; Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 858 278 0371

Comix Experience, 305 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94117. Mon-Sat 11-7; Sun 12-5 (new, back) (00)1 415 863 9258

Flying Colors Comics, 2980 Treat Blvd, Concord, CA 94518. Mon-Sat 11-7 (Fri until 8); Sun 12-6 (new, back, ind, cards, merch) (00)1 510 825 5410

Lee's Comics, Inc., 1020-F N Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043. Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, s-p, adult, merch) (00)1 650 965 1800

Lee's Comics, Inc., 2222 South El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA 94403. Mon-Sun 10-9, (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, adult, s-p, merch) (00)1 650 571 1489

Meltdown Comics & Collectibles, 7522 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90046 (toys, comics, books) (00)1 323 851 7223

Stand-Up Comics, 10020 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Mon-Fri 11 7; Sat-Sun 11-6 (new, back, cards, anime, CCG, merch) (00)1 510 525 3344

Third Planet, 3822 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90505. Sun-Thurs 11-8; Fri + Sat 11-9 (new, ind, back, CCG, RPG, GW, sci-fi/fantasy, anime, merch) (00)1 310 791 6227

Hawaii

Gecko Books & Comics, 3613 Waialae Avenue, Honolulu, 96816. Mon-Sun 9-9 (new, back, cards, toys, merch) (00)1 808 732 1292

Illinois

Comic Kingdom, 5941 W Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634. (new, back) (00)1 773 545 2231

Louisiana

Comic Cosmos, 343 W Esplanade Avenue, Kenner, LA 70065. Mon-Thur 11.30-7, Fri-Sat 11-7.30, Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, CCG, toys, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

Crescent City Comics & Cards, 6111 Elysian Fields, New Orleans, LA 70122. Mon-Sat 11-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

More Fun Comics, 8200 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Tues-Sat 11-7, Sun-Mon 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, merch, toys, CDs) (00)1 504 865 1800

Maine

Casablanca Comics, 151 Middle Street, Portland, ME 04101. Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 12-7 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, merch, art) (00)1 207 780 1676

Casablanca Comics, 778 Roosevelt Trail, Windham, ME 04062. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, merch)(00)1 207 892 0056

Massachusetts

Comicopia, 464 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. Mon-Sun 11-7 (Wed 10-8) (new, merch, CCG, manga, tpbk)(00)1 617 266 4266

Minnesota

Uncle Sven's Comic Shoppe, 1838 St Clair Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105. Mon-Fri 3-6, Sat 11-4 (new, back, tpbk, gn, videos, action figures, CCG, RPG; est 19 years) (00)1 651 699 3409

New York State

Earthworld Comics, 327 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. Mon-Wed 11-6; Thur-Fri 11-7, Sat 11-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, ind, manga/anime, cards, merch) (00)1 518 465 5495

Forbidden Planet (FPI associate), 840 Broadway (at 13th St, NY 10003. Mon-Sat 10-10; Sun 12-10. (new, ind, back, RPG, merch, fantasy) (00)1 212 473 1576

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 4 West 33rd Street (opposite Empire State Building), NY 10001. Mon-Sat 9am-11pm; Sun 10-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 212 268 7088

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 325 New Dorp Lane, Staten Island, NY 10306. Mon-Sun; 12-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 718 351 6299

Midtown Comics, 200 West 40th Street, NY 10018 (00)1 212 302-8192

Ohio

The Laughing Ogre, 4258 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Mon-Sat 10-9; Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 614 267 6473

Oklahoma

Time Warp, 588 SE Washington Street, Bartlesville, OK 74006 (new, back, cards, games, toys, CDs, sci-fi/fantasy) (00)1 918 335 3373

Pennsylvania

Comic Castle, 17 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, PA 17703 Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back) (00)1 717 322 8763

Golden Eagle, Berkshire Square, 1159 Berkshire Boulevard, Wyoming, PA 19610 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 376 8255

Golden Eagle, Fairgrounds Square Mall, Reading, PA 19605 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 921 3160

Tennessee

Collector's World, 1511 E Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, Hickory Plaza South Central, 5751 Nolensville Road, Nashville, TN 37211. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, 10820 Kingston Park #10, Knoxville, TN 37922 Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 423 675 6830

Collector's World, 4006 Granny White Park, Nashville, TN 37204 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 615 385 8136

Texas

Cliff's Comics, 2205 West Berry Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110. (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 817 927 7172

Collectible Heroes, 502 West Calton Road #307, Laredo, TX 78041. Mon-Wed 2-7.30; Thurs-Sat 11.30-7.30 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 956 791 8428

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy, 616 West 34th Street, Austin, TX 78705 (new, back, games, anime, miniatures, prl) (00)1 512 454 2399

Virginia

Thore Comics, 3514 Oaklawn Boulevard, Hopewell, VA 23860: Mon-Sat 11-7, (new, back, Silver Age, sci-fi, M:TG, cards, vinyl)(00)1 804 458 9561

Trilogy Shop, 700 E Little Creek Road, Norfolk, VA 23518. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, merch) (00)1 757 587 2540

Wisconsin

Lost World of Wonders, 6713 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53219 (00)1 414 328 4651

Direct Market Retailers:

Comics International's Retail Index is THE international retail reference source for collectors, creators, publishers and journalists. Through it you can reach over 40,000 dedicated readers each issue for only £6 (US $10) a month! Bookable in six-issue blocks, retailers wishing to be included should send US $60 or £36 (UK: please add £6.30 to cover VAT @ 17.5%) plus shop information as detailed on previous page to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after various entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Retailers: International

Australia

Arcadia Unbound, 267 Forest Road, Hurstville, NSW 2220. Mon-Fri 10.30-7, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-3 (imp, back, manga, merch, CCG) (0061) 2 9585 1489

Books & Bounties/Comics Haven, 157a Charters Towers Road, Townsville, Queensland 4812. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG, CCG) (0061) 7 4779 2408

Fan Attic, 1st Floor, 91 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4002. Mon-Sun 9.30-5.30 (toys, Star Wars, sci-fi collectibles) (0061) 7 3221 1420

Kinda Lotsa Comics and Stuff, Shop 4, 503-511 King Street, Newtown, Sydney, NSW. Mon-Sat 10.30-7.30 (back, toys, merch)(0061) 2 9565 1054

Known Space Books, 1st Floor, 108 Gawler Place, Adelaide, SA 5000. Wed-Sat 12-6 (US/UK back) (0061) 8 8223 4304

Phantom Zone, 23 Anderson Street, Chatswood, NSW 2067. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9411 3709

Phantom Zone, 198 Mann Street, Gosford, NSW 2250. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 43 25 4599

Phantom Zone, 207 George Street, Liverpool, NSW. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9601 2622

Phantom Zone, 285 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW. 2300. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4929 5717

Phantom Zone, 101a Argyle Street, Parramatta, NSW 2150 Mon-Fri 9-6; Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, books, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9891 1848

Phantom Zone, 268 Crown Street, Wollongong, NSW. 2500. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4228 7393

Austria

Comic Treff, Getreidemarkt 2-4, 1010 Vienna. Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 10-1 (imp, back, gn, CCG) (0043) 11 586 76 27

Belgium

Forbidden Zone, 25 Rue de Tamines, 1060 Brussels. (3 floors; imp, back, merch, US/French, STO, toys) (0032 2) 534 63 67 (fax 538 24 52)

Canada

Connection MD, 1539 Van Horne Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H2V 1L4. Mon-Sat 11-6 (new, merch, back, CCG) (00)1 514 948 2627

Dragon Lady Comics & Paper Nostalgia, 609 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1B5. (00)1 416 536 7460

Little Shop of Heroes, 160 Wallace Avenue, South Listowel, Ontario N4W 1X9 (00)1 519 291 2281

Silver Snail Comic Shop, 367 Queen Street West, Toronto M5V 2A4. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs-Fri 11-8; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (00)1 416 593 0889

France

Album, 67 boulevard St Germain, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 53 10 00 60

Album, 6 rue Dante, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 43 54 67 09

Alpha Omega, 25 rue de la Clef, 59800 Lille. Mon 2.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 10.30-12.30/2.30-7.30 (imp, back, French, merch, trading/gaming cards, toys, RPG, Wars/Trek, B5, L5R) (0033) 320 319 375

Astro City, 22 rue Masurel, 59800 Lille. Mon 3-7.30; Tue-Sat 10-12.30, 2-7.30 (imp, manga, cards, merch, kits) (0033) 320 55 1010

Impact Comics, 64 rue Condorcet, 75009 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, merch, CCG)(0033) 42 80 30 10

L'Antre des Dragons, 56 rue de Loup, 33000 Bordeaux. Mon-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0033) 55 65 17378

Les Nageurs de Sable, 14 rue Courteline, 37058 Tours. Mon-Sat 11-1/2-7 (imp, back, cards, merch) (0033) 2 47 39 52 40

Pulps, 14 bld Morland, 75004 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, RPG) (0033) 1 42 72 55 25

Germany

Black Dog Comics, Rodenberg Strasse 9, 10439 Berlin. Mon-Fri 11-6.30, Sat 11-2 (imp, back, gn, t/cards) (0049) 30 4473 6486

Grober Unfug, Zossenerstrasse 32-33, 10961 Berlin. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0049) 30 6940 1490

Greece

Metropolis Comics, 94 Metropoleos St, 54622 Thessaloniki. Mon-Sat 10.30-3.30/7.30-11.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0030) 3 193 7775

Solaris, 6 Botasi Str, 10682, Athens. Mon-Sat 9-3.30/5-8.30 (imp, back, gn, merch) (0030) 1 384 1065

Holland

Henk Lie's Comics & Manga Store, Zeeduk 104, 1012BB Amsterdam. Mon-Sat 11-6; Sun 11-9 (imp, cards, merch, CCG) (0031) 20 421 3688

Hungary

Troll Kepregenyta'r, Terez Krt 13, Budapest 1067. Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-1(imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0036) 1 322 6026

Irish Republic

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5-6 Crompton Quay, Dublin 2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Thurs 10-7); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, u/g, UK, gn, STO) (0035) 3167 10688

Sub-City Comics, 2 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3167 71902

Sub-City Comics, Unit 10, Level 1, Corbettcourt Centre, Eyre Square, Galway. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3915 65994

The 3rd Place, Crow Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3163 36965

Italy

Avalon, via Battisti 9/b, Bologna. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 051 234459

Avalon, via Pedriali 21, Forli. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 0543 33523

Avalon, via Settembrini 20, Milan. Mon 3.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 022 9400410

Avalon, via Foscolo 3, Padova. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7. (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch)(0039) 049 658290

Avalon, via Bissolati 68, Rome. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, cards, merch)

Avalon, via Magenta 0, Torino. Mon 3.30-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1, 2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 011 5617252

Forbidden Planet, via Pinerolo 11/15, 00182 Rome (imp, back, gn) (0039) 06 70305702

Il Marchio Giallo, via Deghi Scipioni 116, Rome. Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, merch, kits) (0039) 06 361 40 60

La Borsa del Fumetto, via Lecco 16, 20124 Milano. (imp, back, European and RPG, CCG) (0039) 11 5617252

Malaysia

The Mind Shop, Starhill Centre, Jalang Bukit Bintag, Kuala Lumpur. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 241 8871

The Mind Shop, S 58 Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 719 8246

The Mind Shop, Jin SS21/39, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 717 6602

New Zealand

Heroes For Sale, Level 2, 62 Queen St, Auckland. Mon-Sat 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g)(0064) 9 307 0682

Whitcoulls Corner Branch, 210 Queen Street, Private Bag 92098, Auckland. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, ind, u/g) (0064) 9 356 5400 (fax: 9 356 5408)

Portugal

BdMania, Rua das Flores 67-71 R/C, 1200 Lisboa. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, CCG, merch) (00351) 21 346 1207

Interzona, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Loja 203, Rua Luis Veaga Lertao 98-120, 6050 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

Mundo Fantasma, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Rua Luis Veiga Leitao, 98/120, 1 Andar-Loja 203, 4050-399 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (US imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

South Africa

Euroniag, Shop 79A, East Rand Mall, Boksburg, Johannesburg. Mon-Sun 9-10 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0027) 11 896 3773

Zed Bree's Comic Universe, Mediterr-anean Building, 24 Tenth Ave, Edenvale 1610 Gauteng. 9.30-6 (imp, merch, gn, CCG) 002711 453 4215 (fax 453 4459)

Spain

Gigamesh, RDA San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona. Mon-Sat 10-1.30/4.30-8 (imp, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0034) 3 246 6359

Sweden

Comics Heaven, Stora Nygatan 23, 11127 Stockholm. Mon-Sat 10-6.30 (imp, back, gn, merch)(0046) 8 202516

Switzerland

Analph Comicladen Strassburgstr, 10 PO Box 1030, 8004 Zürich. (0041) 1 2419695 fax 1 2403442

International Festivals

A listing of the world's major comics festivals and conventions. For further information, call the organisers on the phone, fax or e-mail numbers provided. To view updates, contact them on their websites. Organisers' estimates of their previous year's attendance is given in brackets.

May 13-15: England

COMIC EXPO 2, British Empire and Commonwealth Exhibition Hall and Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol. Organisers: Area 51 & Comics International. 01179 244655. E-mail: comicexpo@fsmail.net. Website: www.comicexpo.net

May 13-15: Finland

ARCTIC COMICS FESTIVAL, KEMI. Organisers: The Arctic Comics Centre, Rautatienkatu 13 B, FIN-90100 Oulu, Finland. 00358 400 514 540. www.kemi.fi/sarjis

May 14-15: England

LONDON EXPO, ExCel Convention Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London. Organisers: London Expo (EW), PO Box 38727, London E10 7YH. 020 8523 1074. E-mail: info@londonexpo.com www.londonexpo.com

May 26-29: Switzerland

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA BANDE DESSINEE DE SIERRE. Organisers: Festival BD Sierre, CP 200, CH-3960 Sierre, Switzerland. 0041 27 455 90 43 fax: 0041 27 455 91 01. www.bdsierre.ch

June 9-12: Spain

THE 23RD BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL COMIC FESTIVAL. Organisers: Ficomic, Palau, 4 Baixos, 08002 Barcelona, Spain. 0034 93 301 23 69. www.ficomic.com

July 14-17: United States

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL '05, San Diego, California. Organisers: Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. 001 619 491 2475. www.comic-con.org

August 5-7: United States

WIZARD WORLD CHICAGO CON 2005. Organisers: Wizard World Chicago, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. 001 608 226 0200. www.wizarduniverse.com

August 13-14: England

MEMORABILIA '05, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Memorabilia, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5SZ. 0870 224 8615. www.memorabilia.co.uk

August 26-28: Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL COMIC BOOK EXPO 2005, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. www.hobbystar.com

September 2-5: United States

DRAGON*CON 2005, Atlanta, Georgia. Organisers: Dragon*Con, PO Box 16459, Atlanta, GA 30321-9998. 001 770 909 0115. www.dragoncon.org

September 17-18: United States

BALTIMORE COMIC-CON, The Baltimore Convention Centre, One West Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. 001 410 526 7410. www.comicon.com/baltimore

September 18-19: Finland

THE 19TH HELSINKI COMICS FESTIVAL. Organisers: The Finnish Comics Society, PL 927, 00101 Helsinki, Finland. 00358 50 407 0553. E-mail: tiina-riikka.rauhala@humak.edu

October 7-9: Norway

RAPTUS INTERNATIONAL COMICS FESTIVAL. Organisers: Raptus Bergen Comics Festival, Box 31, 5838 Bergen, Norway. 0047 986 71 710. www.raptus.no

October 12-13: Belgium

FACTS 2005, ICC Citadelpark, 9000 Gent. Organisers: Forbidden Zone, 25 Rue de Tamines, 1060 Brussels, Belgium. 0032 2 534 63 67. www.facts-convention.com

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicate that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Comics Publishers

North America

Unlike Europe, North American publishers invariably favour indie status to that of being labelled small press. This results in there being hundreds of comics publishers.

While circulations vary immensly, the following are the continent's major comicbook producers with titles printing between 5,000 and 150,000 copies. Contact telephone numbers are given where readily available. Website details can be found on the first page of the directory section.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, PO Box 1674 Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2 (Cerebus)

ABSTRACT STUDIOS, PO Box 271487, Houston, TX 77277-1487 (Strangers in Paradise)

AC COMICS, PO Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752-1216 (adventure titles, Golden Age superhero and western reprints)

ACCLAIM COMICS, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542 (game tie-in adventure, Valiant superhero imprint. dormant) (00)1 516 656 5000

AiT/PLANET LAR, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116 (graphic novels) (00)1 415 504 7516

ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 503 North West 37th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609-2204 (alternative titles and graphic novels) (00)1 352 373 6336

AMERICAN MEDIA CONSUMER ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 600 East Coast Avenue, Lantana, Florida 33464 (Cracked) (00)1 561 586 1111

ANTARCTIC PRESS, 7272 Wurzbach Parkway , Suite 204, San Antonio, Texas TX 78240 (adventure and US manga titles)

ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS, 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (humour titles) (00)1 914 381 5155

AVATAR PRESS, 9 Triumph Drive, Urbana, IL 61802 (horror and fantasy titles) (00)1 217 384 2216

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT, 9744 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 402, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, CA 90212 (adventure titles; dormant)

BONGO ENTERTAINMENT, 1440 South Sepulveda Boulevard, 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (The Simpsons and Futurama and related humour titles) (00)1 310 966 6168

CALIBER COMICS, 225 North Sheldon Road, Plymouth, MI 48170 (black and white adventure titles) (00)1 734 462 0457

CARTOON BOOKS, PO Box 16973, Columbus, OH43216 (Bone and related titles)

CROSSGEN ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677 (fantasy and adventure titles) (00)1 813 891 1702

CRUSADE FINE ARTS LTD, PO Box 845, Bayport, NY 11705 (fantasy and adventure) (00)1 631 472 2866

DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 South East Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222 (adventure, licensed, US and Japanese manga) (00)1 503 652 8815

DC COMICS, 1700 Broadway, NY 10019 (adventure and humour titles, MAD, Vertigo and Paradox Press imprints) (00)1 212 636 5400

DRAWN & QUARTERLY, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4SB, Canada (black and white biog)

DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS, 11 Allstate Parkway, Suite 200, Markham, Ontario L3R 9T8, Canada (adventure titles)

DYNAMIC FORCES, 155 Ninth Avenue, Suite E, Runnemede, NJ 08078 (variant editions and limited edition merchandise) (00)1 856 312 1040

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way North East, Seattle, Washington 98115 (adventure, biographical and Eros adult titles) (00)1 206 524 1967

HARRIS COMICS, 1115 Broadway, 8th Floor, NY 10010 (Vampirella, fantasy and horror titles) (00)1 212 807 7100

HEAVY METAL, 100 North Village Road, Suite 12, Rockville Center, NY 11570 (adult fantasy magazines and spin-off editions)

HUMANOIDS PUBLISHING, PO Box 931658, Hollywood, California CA 90093 (US-European editions)

IMAGE COMICS, 1071 North Batavia Street, Suite A, Orange, CA 92867 (adventure titles) (00)1 714 2880200

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, 10th Floor, East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (adventure, humour and licensed titles) (00)1 212 5764000

NBM PUBLICATIONS, 185 Madison Avenue, Suite 1504, New York, NY 10016 (adult fantasy graphic novels and magazines)

ONI PRESS, 6336 South East Milwaukie Avenue, PMB 30, Portland, OR 97202 (adventure titles)

RADIO COMIX, 11765 West Avenue, PMB #117, San Antonio, TX 78216 (anthropomorphic manga) (00)1 210 3487195

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC, PO Box 834, Stanhope, NJ 07802 (adult titles)

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS PUBLISHING, 577 South Market Street, San Jose, CA 95113 (black and white fantasy titles) (00)1 9718929

TOP SHELF PRODUCTIONS, PO Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282 (alternative and biographical titles) (00)1 770 4276395

TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614 (comics feature and history magazines and books) tel: (00)1 919 449 0344 fax: (00) 1 919 449 0327

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS, PO Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107 (English translated manga titles)

WaRP GRAPHICS, 2600 South Road, Suite 44/242, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 (Elfquest and spin-off titles)

United Kingdom

The following are major UK comics and graphic novel publishers. If calling from outside of the UK, you should drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe and Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

AP COMICS, Suite 3, 7 French Row, St Albans, Herts AL3 5DU (adventure titles)

COM.X, The Dickens Inn, Kirk Street, London WC1N 2DG (adventure titles) 020 7831 7777

DC THOMSON, 2 Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ (humour and adventure titles, pocket books and annuals)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD (humour and adventure titles, pocket books and annuals) 020 7907 6000

EGMONT MAGAZINES LTD, Fourth Floor, 184-192 Drummond Street, London NW1 3HP (humour, licensed and pre-school titles) 020 7380 6430

HAMLYN BOOKS, 2-4 Heron Quays, London E14 4JB (graphic novels) 020 7531 8400

JOHN BROWN CITRUS PUBLISHING, The New Boathouse, 136-142 Bramley Road, London W10 6SR (albums) 020 7565 3000

KNOCKABOUT COMICS, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (humour titles and underground comix and graphic novels) 020 8969 2945

PANINI COMICS (UK), Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 5UJ (humour and adventure comics, Marvel licensed titles) 01892 500100

PULP THEATRE ENTERTAINMENT, Mermaid Court, 1 Mermaid House, London Bridge, London SE1 1HR (adventure titles) 020 7403 0378

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS LTD, The Studio, Brewer Street, Oxford OX1 1QN (Judge Dredd The Megazine and 2000 AD) 01865 792201

THE REDAN COMPANY, Canon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury SY2 5DE (pre-school humour and licenced titles) 01743 364433

SAVOY BOOKS, 446 Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 3BW (adult comics, magazines, books and graphic novels) 0161 445 5771

TITAN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LTD, Titan House, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (licensed graphic novels, books, magazines and comics) 020 7620 0200

France

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0033 becomes 011 33

ALBIN MICHEL, 22 rue Huyghens, 75014 Paris (albums) (0033) 1 42 79 10 00

CASTERMAN, 36 rue du Chemin Vert, 75011, Paris (albums and manga titles)

DARGAUD, 15-27 rue Moussorgski, 75018 Paris (albums and manga titles) tel: (0033) 1 53 26 32 32 fax: (0033) 1 53 26 32 00

DELCOURT, 54 rue d'Hauteville, 75010 Paris (albums and comics) tel: (0033) 1 56 03 92 20 fax: (0033) 1 56 03 92 30

FLUIDE GLACIAL, 33 avenue du Main, BP 187, 75755 Paris (comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 20 23 96

GLENAT, 31-33 rue Ernest Renan, 92130 Issy-Les-Moulineaux (albums and manga titles) tel: (0033) 1 41 46 11 41 fax: (0033) 1 41 46 11 13

J'AI LU, 84 rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris (licenced Japanese manga titles) (0033) 1 44 39 34 70

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES, 5 Passage Piver, 75011 Paris (albums) tel: (0033) 1 49 29 88 88 fax: (0033) 1 49 29 88 89

SEMIC FRANCE, 44316 Nantes Cedex 03 (licenced comics and albums) (0033) 2 51 86 14 14

Italy

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0039 becomes 011 39

SERGIO BONELLI EDITORE, via Buonarroti 38, 20145 Milano (black and white comics)

CULT COMICS, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Image and Dark Horse licensed titles)

MAGIC PRESS, Zona industriale via Ragusa 18, 00040 Pavona, Roma (Vertigo and WildStorm licensed titles) (0039) 06 93020361

STAR COMICS, strada Selvette 1bis/1 Bosco (PG) (comics and black and white manga titles)

ASTORINA S.R.I., via Boccaccio 32, 20123 Milano (Diabolik original and reprint black and white)

KING COMICS, via Pinerolo 3, 00182 Roma (comics)

Spain

The following are the country's comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0034 becomes 011 34

NORMA EDITORAL, Fluvià 89, 08019 Barcelona (licensed DC and Dark Horse comics and albums) 0034 93 303 68 20

EDITORIAL PLANETA-DE AGOSTINI, SA, Aribau 185, 08021 Barcelona (licensed Dark Horse comics and albums)

TOUTAIN EDITOR, SA, Diagonal 325, E-08009 Barcelona (licensed Marvel, Dark Horse, Chaos!, Image and manga comics and albums) 0034 93 344 06 00

EDICIONES LA CÚPULA, Plaza de las Beatas 3, E-08003 Barcelona (adult comics and albums) 0034 32 682 8 05

Mail Order Specialists

Key to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available	CoBRA	= Comic Book Retailers' mail order protection scheme
dis	= bulk discount terms		
cat	= phone/write for catalogue	cc	= major credit cards accepted
s-cat	= sae for catalogue		
wants	= wants lists accepted	sae	= send stamped, addressed envelope with enquiry
s-wants	= sae with wants lists		

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Golden Age

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945, the first age of superhero comics, but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics.

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Goldust Comics, 67 St John's Wood High Street, London NW8 7NL (high grade, cat, wants, cc) 020 8341 5558

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Silver Age

*Accepted as starting in 1955 with DC's superhero rebirth through **Detective Comics** #225 (introducing the Martian Manhunter) and **Showcase** #4 (introducing the Barry Allen Flash). Herein covering titles up to late 1960s.*

Colmore Comics & Collectibles, Vienna House, Starley Way, Birmingham B37 7GN (cat, cc, high grade, CGC) 0121 767 1803 fax: 0121 767 1910

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

East Coast Comics UK, 28 Acton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 7LG (high grade, s-want, cc, sae) 01502 578385 (day) 560727 (eve)

Goldust Comics, 67 St John's Wood High Street, London NW8 7NL (high grade, cat, wants, cc) 020 8341 5558

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Quicksilver Comics, PO Box 73, Ossett WF5 0YQ (s-cat, dis, wants, cc, CoBRA) 01924 270500 (fax: 270919)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax 680686)

Steve Rock Comics, 4 Orme Drive, Clevedon, Somerset BS21 7HD (Silver-Bronze, cat, wants, sae)

Post-Silver Age

Comics from 1970 to date: from Bronze Age , Marvel Age and Lead Age up to Platinum Age, Gimmick Age, Image Age and beyond. Historians will doubtless eventually decide on a name.

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Tarpaulin Books and Comics, 5 Oak Close, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3EZ (wants, s-cat) 01842 820139

Hot Comics

Current or key titles, first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble.

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN (wants, cc, dis) 020 8686 2400

Advance Imports

US comics are not generally available in UK newsagents, except for some sea-freight shipped low-cover price DCs and Marvels, and can only be found through specialists in the rest of the world. The following companies offer air-shipped copies from all of the major US publishers.

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 01206 561912

Chapter 12, 2 Prospect Place, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 1LE (wants, s-cat, CoBRA) 01843 860354

86th Floor Comics, 6 Shipley Common Lane, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8TR (dis, cat, cc) 0115 9443009

Forbidden Planet Megastore, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR (s-cat cc) 020 7420 3666

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 020 7636 1011

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse,* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Red Hot Comics, The Warehouse Block D Unit 8, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH (CoBRA, w/s, dis, wants, cc) tel/fax: 0141 630 0049

Limited Editions

Many high-profile miniseries and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n, cat) 020 8446 3464

Trading Cards

Several mail order dealers carry a range of non-sports cards and related peripherals (files, folders, sleeves).

Beyond Comics, 76 Harlescott Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3BZ (s-cat, s-wants, sae, CoBRA) tel/fax: 020 7564 4213

John McDonald: Non-Sport Trading Cards, 20 Alder Grove, Coatbridge, Lanarkshire ML5 3PT (cat, wants) tel/fax: 01236 433358

Old British Titles

The popularity of old British comics continues to increase as more dealers expand into this area. The following specialise in such titles.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

30th Century Comics, 18 Lower Richmond Road, Putney, London SW15 1JP (cat, wants, CoBRA, cc) 020 8788 2052

Weird Fantasy, 19 Decoy Road, Ormesby, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR29 3LG (s-cat, s-wants, annuals specialist)

Merchandise

Comics, film and TV-related t-shirts, posters, video games, badges, toys, action figures, etc.

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton, Beds LU1 2TP. (specialists in Star Trek, Star Wars and sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Original Art

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available for collectors.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Peripherals

Acid-free protection for comics. Backing boards, protective bags, storage boxes, etc.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Just Comics, 65 Station Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 2TH (w/s only, CollectorLine™ distributor) 01487 824895 824896

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse,* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

General Fantasy

As well as comics old and new, some suppliers also provide catalogues of multi-media fantasy, covering TV, film, trading cards and toys.

Forbidden Planet Mail Order, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (cat) 020 7803 1900 (fax: 7803 1901)

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Manga Titles

English language translations of Japanese comics and US titles drawn in the Japanese style.

United Publications, 85 Croydon Road, Keston, Kent BR2 8HU (ind, back, cat, wants, cc) 020 8325 9507

Alternative & Biographical

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life comicbooks and graphic novels (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar...)

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (wants) 020 7636 1011

Knockabout Comics, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 020 8969 2945 (fax: 8968 7614)

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY 0115 9508045

Comics Auctions

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their valuable comics. The following accept items for sale, as well as providing regular catalogues for mail order bids.

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Distributors

Anybody considering opening a comics shop or becoming a mail order dealer can obtain further information about the supply of titles from the following who bulk air import US and European comics and related items on a weekly basis.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP (graphic novels, art books, comics, remainders, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8768 0022

Diamond Comic Distributors, 2nd Floor, Warton House, 150 High Street, London E15 2NP (US and European comics, cards and related items) 020 8536 5730 (fax: 8536 5736)

Red Route Distribution, Unit 24, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (US & European comics/ graphic novels, back-list specialists) 020 8960 5855

Turnaround Publisher Services, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ (graphic novels, art books, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8829 3000

Mail Order Dealers:

CI's Mail Order Index is the industry's most cost-effective and highly-targeted way to reach a huge dedicated audience in excess of 40,000 readers every month. It costs only £4 ($6 US) per entry per issue to appear and is bookable in advance as a six-issue series. Send pre-payment of £24/$36 (plus £4.20 VAT for UK advertisers) per category with your details to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

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Whether for publication or not, all advertisements must be accompanied by full name, home address and daytime phone number of advertiser.

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Comics, TV and film memorabilia and collectables for sale. Large selection of Marvel, DC and indies. Toys, original production animation cels, screen-used props, etc. We are a long-established London mart and NEC Memorabilia trader, now online at www.quitebizarre.co.uk. Not on the Internet? Call 020 8699 2196 with your wants.

Massive summer sale. Over 30,000 comics – 1980s to present, including DC, Marvel, indies, Milestone, 2099, Prestige, graphic novels, hardbacks, etc. Including over 800 mini/maxi sets priced below trade prices. Everything priced to sell and in mostly near mint condition. 14-page list available from Richard's Comics, 9 Highlands Road, Wolverhampton WV3 8AH. Tel: 01902 335027

For sale: Neal Adams – **Batman** #243 nm £50; **Conan** #37 nm £15; **X-Men** #56 nm £90 #107 nm £50; **Avengers** #93 vfn £40; **X-Men Giant Size** #2 nm £70; **Batman Family** #1 fn £15; **Action Comics** #425 nm £15; **Spectre** #5 fn £65; **Marvel Spotlight** #2 vg/fn (pages inked) £35. Non-Adams titles – **Dr Strange** #1 nm £40; **Amazing Spider-Man** #138, #139, #140 nm £20 each, #161 m, #169 £20 each; **Spectacular Spider-Man** #1 nm £25; **X-Men** #67 nm £35. Paperbacks – **Casper (The Friendly Ghost)** 7 different (1979) nm £35 the lot; **Mighty Thor**, **Incredible Hulk** 4 Square (1967) nm £20 each; **Batman** Signet (1966) gd £15. Prices include postage. Contact John Balfour, Westerstraat 67-3, Amsterdam, Holland 1015LW.

Thousands of comics for sale at ridiculously cheap prices, including DC, Marvel, indie and graphic novels. For a full list please write to Scott Skelding, DNR Wroughton, Wroughton Airfield, Swindon SN4 0ST.

For sale: DC comics collection from the 1960s to the 1990s. Many annuals, first issues, etc of all the main titles, all at low, low prices. Will sell as one lot or split. Send an sae to Geoff Griffiths Comics, 27 Pennine View, Glasgow Dock, Lancaster LA2 0AS.

Wanted

Advertisers are reminded that Wanted ads must be no longer than 50 words (including address), and only single insertion private advertisements can be published free of charge.

Wanted: **Marvel Rampage** #1, #2 and #3 with freebies, **Coven** volume 7 #3 and **Teen Titans** #1 (September 2003) and #4 (December 2003). Contact Pete Webb, 36 Church Street, Denby Village, Ripley DE5 8PH. Tel: 07745 831812.

From around the world I am trying to find ALL comics, books, magazines, articles, interviews, posters, postcards, displays, leaflets, catalogues and all other advertising materials, with art by Don Lawrence. I especially need **Daily Telegraph** (Januray 3rd 2004), **Mayfair** volume 39 #6 (May 2004), **Eagle Flies Again** #10 (Spring 2004) and **Contrivance** '89. Contact Rob van Haaren, Zandtong 2, 5658 AC Eindhoven, Netherlands.

Wanted: **Beware the Creeper** 1-6 (DC 1968/9) in good condition or reprint. Also Marvel colour reprints from the 1960s and 1970s (Marvel Tales, etc). Contact Robert Sweeney, 9d Woodside Crescent, Paisley PA1 2ND. Tel: 0141 889 4462. E-mail: rabbiejs2000@yahoo.co.uk.

Wanted: **Beware the Creeper** 1-6 (DC 1968/9) in good condition or reprint. Also Marvel colour reprints from the 1960s and 1970s (Marvel Tales, etc). Contact Robert Sweeney, 9d Woodside Crescent, Paisley PA1 2ND. Tel: 0141 889 4462. E-mail: rabbiejs2000@yahoo.co.uk.

Wanted: English weekly comics **TV Comic**, **Yogi Bear**, **Huckleberry Hound**, **Beezer** and **Topper** 1960s and 1970s. Gold Key: **Steve Zodiac** and **Fireball XL5**, **Green Acres**, **Bewitched**, **Mr Ed**, **Hogan's Heroes**, **The Munsters**. Car '54: where are you? Any Archie 80-Page Giants. Small-sized pin-up magazines: **66**, **Spick**, **Span**, **Stag**, **Model**, **Oh! My!**, **Carnival**. And anything on Bettie Page. John Balfour, Westerstraat 67-3, Amsterdam, Holland 1015 LW.

Wanted: **The Original Astro Boy** 1-19 (now). 1970s UK weeklies: **Vulcan**, **Valiant** and **Lion** (any condition), **Strangehaven** 1-16, **Marvel's Greatest Comics** 35-96. Will pay cash or trade against items on my latest list. Contact Anthony Pick, 20 Grove Road, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2DT.

Announcements

Fanzine and small press titles must not be offered for sale before being printed. To verify publication, a sample copy must be sent in along with the advertising copy (50 words max). Single bookings only, so everybody gets a chance!

Worried about international terrorism? Read **Sgt. Mike Battle: The Greatest American Hero!** #6 and fondly recall the time when terrorist groups dressed in animal-themed costumes and fought Battle Force in Panda Strikes Back. Send £1 plus an sae to Graham Pearce, 42 Talbot Road, Penwortham, Preston, Lancashire PR1 9QX. www.sgtmikebattle.com

Free! **Must... Crush... Mankind!** comic. *Sgt. Doomrock*, *Kung-fu Clown*, *Cat & Dog* and many more feature in Lincolnshire Council-funded comic showcasing local talent. Varying styles, ages, etc. A one-off with limited stock remaining. Send an A4 sae to East Coast Comix, Flat B, 19 Welholme Road, Grimsby DN32 0DR.

A double helping of... well, stuff, this month, as **Comics Retrospective** 16 examines DC Thomson's **Red Dagger** and **Lucky Charm** magazines, and the surprisingly simultaneous issue 17 looks at the career of Deaths Head! Both available now, £1.40 each, from Tony Ingrham, 3 Lower Harlings, Shotley Gate, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 1QE.

Wanted: two pro-quality artists to work on projects for submission to publishers. Genres involved include western, sci-fi, superheroes, pirates and horror. Please send photocopies only to Terry Hooper, 203 Ashton Drive, Ashton Vale, Bristol BS3 2PY. Overseas artists also welcome!

Available now: *Planet of the Apes* fanzine **Simian Scrolls** featuring exclusive interviews with Mike Ploog and Jerry Pournelle. £3 (including p&p) from John Roche, Mediation House, 74 Stockwell Road, Pembroke Dock SA72 6TQ. E-mail: mail@mediationhuose.com.

Parataxis 5! Rereleased from Bionic Comics: the super-students of Parataxis face their greatest challenge yet as the mysterious Cyber-Sorceress tries to get them to dress up in spandex! **Parataxis** 5 from Bionic Comics, 94 Tippett Rise, Reading RG2 0DZ for the handsome sum of two first class stamps!

Oh, the horror! MPH Comics' **Tracks** continues with issue #3, modern horror anthology for mature readers. More heroin-addicted, zombie-plagued nightmares in *Cold Turkey!* The evil of computer game obsession and manic depression in *Parallel Tracks!* Taking a 'stab' (groan) at the *Evil Dead* trilogy in *Horror Kid!* Translating horror stories to the comicbook page in *Why Horror?* #2 (plus 30p postage) from Matt Rogerson, MPH Comics, 152 Ashfield Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 1QH. Issues #1 and #2 are still available. Oh, the horror!

Short Stories, the ultimate stripzine is here! Featuring X-Men, Star Wars, Octobriana and more! With work by Stephen Prestwood, Craig John, Neil Edwards and John Short! Send cheques and postal orders for #2 to J.A. Short, 20 Grants Avenue, Bournemouth NH1 4NR.

Lightning in Paradise. New prose zine featuring Godpack's Blitziana fighting a global crisis. 50 pages. £3.50 including postage from Steve Nottingham, 37 Maxwell Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 1RG.

Comic Societies

Join The Eagle Society, dedicated to the memory of Britain's National Strip Cartoon Weekly – The Eagle 1950-1969. For just £18 per year (cheques to The Eagle Society) members receive our quarterly journal **Eagle Times**, as well as the chance to attend social gatherings and meet original Eagle contributors. Write to: Keith Howard, 25a Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2UA. E-mail: rsheaf@npg.org.uk

The Comics Creators Guild for industry veterans and aspiring professionals, the largest comics organisation in Europe. Monthly meetings, newsletter, exclusive publications, free legal advice, special discounts and more. For further info contact: Comics Creators Guild, 22 St James Mansions, West End Lane, West Hampstead, London NW6 2AA. www.comicscreators.org.uk

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HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 68, 91, 168 or 188 to Woburn Place. UNDERGROUND: Piccadilly Line to Russell Square. NATIONAL RAIL: Euston and Kings Cross are within walking distance of the venue.

FUTURE DATES: 19TH JUNE, 17TH JULY, 21ST AUGUST 2005

Dealers: for table availability phone 020 7476 6873

www.comicmart.co.uk

Events

A summary of all the events advertised this issue

April

1/4-22/5 London: Robert Crumb exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery ..... (p4)
23/4 Birmingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Aston University, Students' Guild Hall, Aston Triangle ..... (p56)
30/4 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

May

7/5 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show with guest artist Staz Johnson, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)
13/5 Bristol: ProCon 2, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol ..... (p12)
13-15/5 Bristol: Comic Expo, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol ..... (p67)
14/5 Glasgow: Glasgow Comic & Toy Fair, Henry Wood Hall, Claremont Street, Glasgow ..... (p58)
15/5 London: The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)
21/5 Bedford: Jamie Delano, Liam Sharp, David Lloyd and Alan Grant signing at Close Encounters ..... (p11)
28/5 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)
29/5 London: The London ABC Show, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, Russell Square ..... (p50)

June

11/6 Nottingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p56)
18/6 Sheffield: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Royal Society for the Blind, Main Hall, Mappin Street (off West Street) ..... (p56)
19/6 London: The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)
25/6 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)
26/6 Liverpool: Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)

July

2/7 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)
9/7 Birmingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Aston University, Students' Guild Hall, Aston Triangle ..... (p56)
17/7 London: The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)
30/7 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)

August

6/8 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)
21/8 London: The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)

September

3/9 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)
11/9 London: The London ABC Show, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, Russell Square ..... (p50)

Please note: the above listing of UK comics, trading card and related events is free to Comics International display advertisers only.

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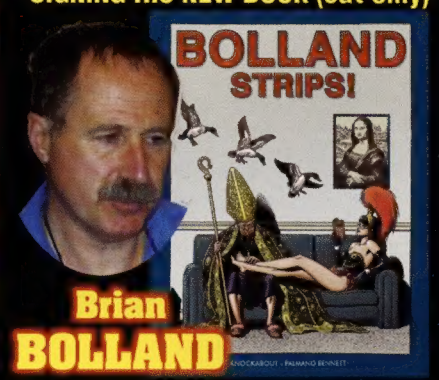

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SAT 14/5: 10:00am - 6:00pm
SUN 15/5: 10:30am - 5:00pm

Info: 0117 924 4655

For full creator/events listings and updates, log on to www.comicexpo.net

Previously announced guest Herb Trimpe regrets that, due to a combination of work and personal matters, he is unable to attend Comic Expo.

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